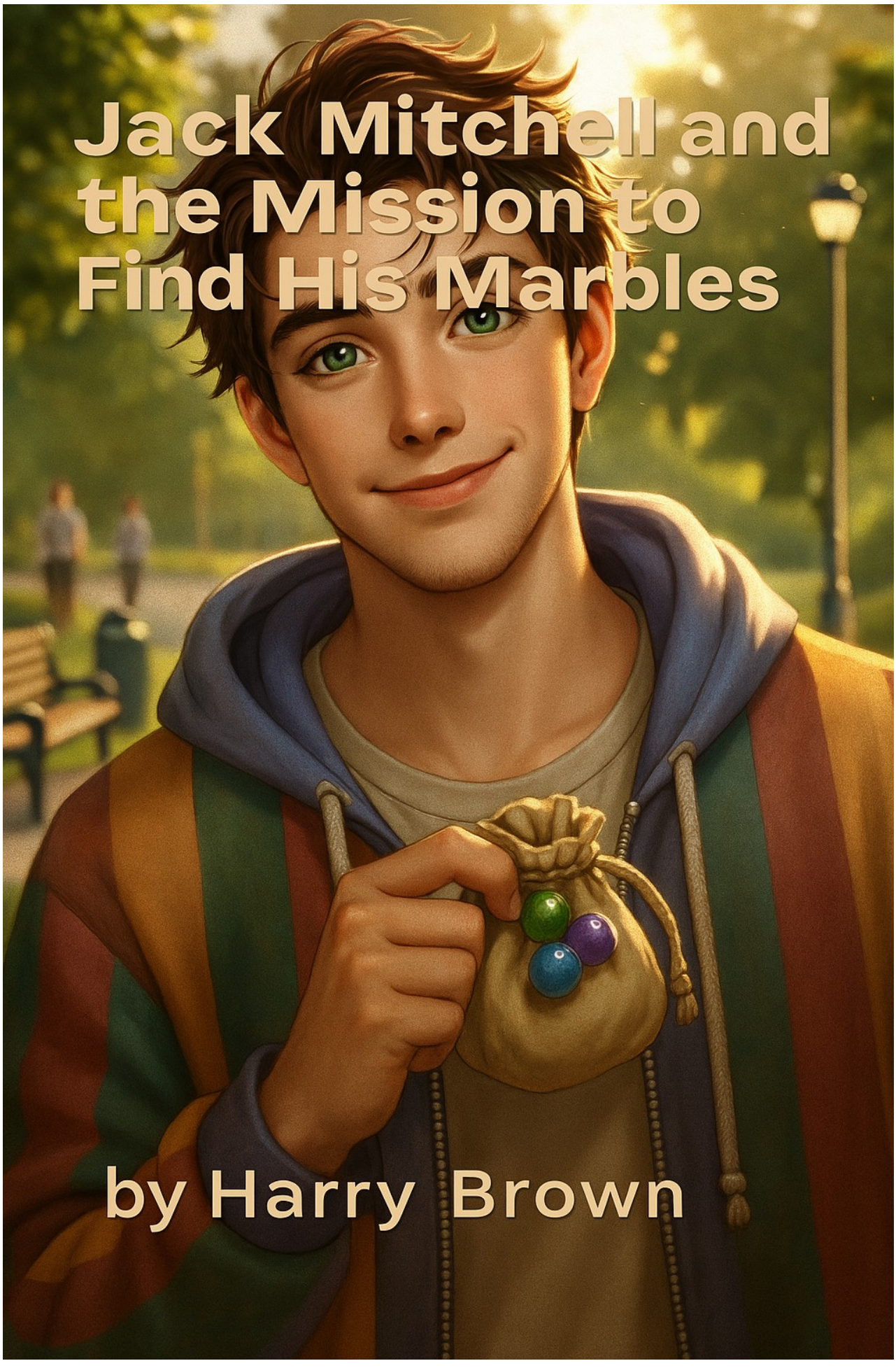
Jack Mitchell and the Mission to Find His Marbles
by Harry Brown

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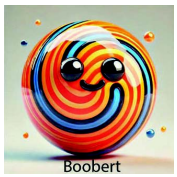
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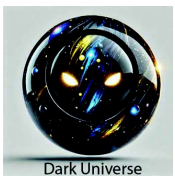
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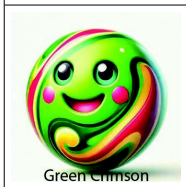
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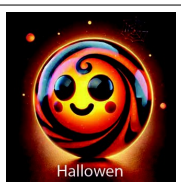
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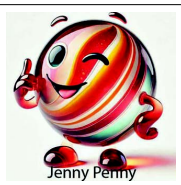
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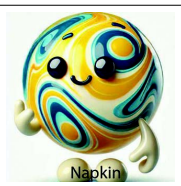
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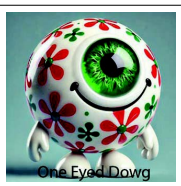

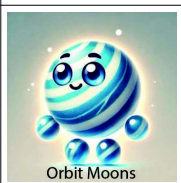
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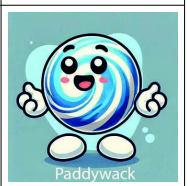
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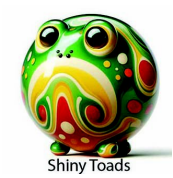
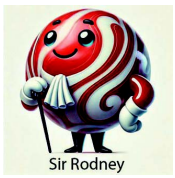
Rock Balls	Rock Octopussy	Sabre Squeezle	Scorched Earth	Shark Toons	 Shiny Toads	Sir Oswald
 Sir Rodney		Softball Head			Spider Taps	Spiral Gems
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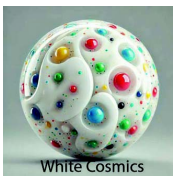
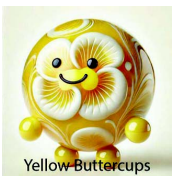
	Twixts	 White Cosmics	White Diamonds		 Yellow Buttercups	Yellow Dotties
Yellow Skies						

The Empty Pouch

It was a quiet Saturday morning in Orpington, Kent. The sun filtered softly through the oak trees that lined the park, and a gentle breeze rustled the leaves like nature was whispering secrets. Jack Mitchell, a spirited 19-year-old with bright green eyes and a wild mop of brown hair, wandered down the path near the cricket field, hands in his hoodie pockets, deep in thought.

Jack was always on the lookout for adventure, and today would be no different.

Tucked between two hedgerows, just beside the old bandstand, he spotted something lying in the grass. Curious, he knelt down and picked it up. It was a small, weathered pouch made of soft brown leather with a knotted rope tie. He opened it gently.

It was completely empty.

Jack felt a strange tingle run through his fingers. The pouch, though old, had a warmth to it — like it was waiting for something. Waiting to be filled.

"What do you think it is?" asked Lenny, Jack's younger brother, who had been kicking a football nearby.

"Looks like a marble bag," said Ollie, the youngest of the three, peering over Jack’s shoulder.

Just then, their cousin Imogen arrived, wearing her signature yellow cap and notebook in hand. She loved mysteries. And this? This was a good one.

"Let’s find out where it came from," Imogen said with a spark in her eye.

Bernard, their loyal golden retriever, bounded over with a bark and, to everyone's shock, said, "That pouch hasn’t been opened in 99 years!"

The kids stared.

"You can talk?!" Jack exclaimed.

Bernard wagged his tail. "Only when it matters. And trust me — this matters. The Marble Kingdom is in trouble, and you're the only ones who can help."

So began their journey.

Jack tucked the pouch into his hoodie pocket, not knowing that soon they would travel across 99 countries, solving puzzles, making friends, and finding magical marbles to restore balance to a world forgotten by time.

The first marble was out there somewhere — and Jack was ready.

Chapter 1: *Jack and the Whispering Cliffs of Ireland*

SPIRAL RELLOWS

Their first stop was Ireland — the Emerald Isle.

Bernard led the way, sniffing out an ancient trail that brought them to the coast of County Clare, where the famous Cliffs of Moher stretched like great green battlements above the crashing Atlantic.

"This place is unreal," said Imogen, sketching in her notebook as the wind whipped through her hair.

"Yeah, if we're not careful, we'll be blown into the sea," joked Lenny, grabbing onto Ollie as the youngest nearly tumbled from a sudden gust.

Jack stood tall, the pouch tucked safely in his jacket. He felt it shift — something inside... moved. He quickly opened it.

Still empty.

"It's close," Bernard said, his ears perked. "The first marble is hidden here. The cliffs are whispering. Listen."

They all went silent. And sure enough, the wind wasn't just howling — it was speaking.

"Find the harp that holds the tune,
Beneath the stone, revealed by moon.
One note played, the song shall call,
The marble hidden in the wall."

"A riddle!" Imogen grinned. "We need to find a harp — or something shaped like one."

As dusk fell, the group explored every rocky crevice until Jack spotted something carved into the cliffside. It was a small harp etched in stone, just visible in the moonlight. Beneath it, a loose slab.

Together, they pried it open.

There, nestled in moss, glimmered a marble — deep yellow-green, spiralled like windblown ivy. It sparkled with a faint hum, and as Jack touched it, they all heard distant voices on the breeze — whispers from long ago.

SPIRAL RELLOWS, Bernard said softly. "She can echo voices from the past. A powerful marble, especially for solving ancient puzzles."

Jack picked it up. The pouch shimmered.

Pop! — the marble vanished from his hand and reappeared safely inside.

"One down," Jack said with a grin.

"Ninety-eight to go," Ollie added.

Lenny crossed his arms. "This marble business just got a lot more real."

And so their marble-finding adventure continued, echoing across cliffs, time... and the world.

Chapter 2: *Jack and the Secret Under Paris*

SABRE SQUEEZLE

The train from Dublin to Paris — via ferry and countless sandwiches — was long but filled with laughter and planning. Jack sat by the window of their little Airbnb apartment, gazing out at the rooftops of Montmartre. His pouch lay beside him on the table, still glowing faintly from the Spiral Rellows marble tucked inside.

Bernard stirred from his nap and stretched. “Paris. City of light, cheese, and secrets.”

Ollie, with a baguette almost as tall as he was, said, “So what are we looking for? A marble in the Eiffel Tower?”

Bernard wagged his tail. “Nope. Deeper. Much deeper.”

They followed him underground.

Imogen guided them through narrow tunnels and stone corridors until they reached a gate in the famous Catacombs — rows of bones stacked into eerie walls. “This place is creepy,” Lenny whispered.

“It’s not the bones that bother me,” Jack said, holding the pouch. “It’s the silence.”

A soft *click* echoed from the wall. A hidden tile had shifted slightly under Ollie’s foot.

A gust of cold air swirled past them, and a glowing inscription appeared:

"Through shadowed skull and echo’s breath,
Awaits the flame that dodges death.
Seek not with sight, but sense the flame,
For only the brave shall speak its name."

A single candle flickered to life beside the wall. Jack stepped forward and picked it up. The moment the candle flame touched the inscription, part of the wall dissolved.

Inside was a dusty pedestal. Atop it, resting in a small velvet-lined hollow, was a marble that shimmered like a dancing fire: ?

SABRE SQUEEZLE.

It was fiery, bright, and shaped almost like it had tiny fangs inside.

“Squeeze it carefully,” Bernard warned. “It’s the only marble with reactive heat.”

Jack gently touched it. It pulsed.

Pop!

Into the pouch it went, and a warm breeze blew through the Catacombs, as if Paris herself had just exhaled.

“That’s two,” said Jack.

“Only ninety-seven to go,” Imogen smiled, snapping a photo of the now empty pedestal.

And as they left the tunnels behind and the bells of Notre-Dame rang far above, the pouch at Jack’s side gave off a new glow… and a new destination was calling.

Chapter 3: *Jack and the Song Beneath Venice*

BONKA BONKA

Venice shimmered beneath a soft golden haze as the boat glided down the Grand Canal. Ollie leaned over the side, watching fish swirl through the water. “This place is floating,” he whispered.

“Technically, it’s sinking,” said Lenny.

Jack rolled his eyes. “Let’s just find the marble before we all end up swimming.”

Bernard barked. “The clue points here — beneath Venice. There's a chamber where music has no source, yet echoes still sing.”

Imogen raised an eyebrow. “We’re looking for a ghost choir?”

“Sort of,” said Bernard. “There’s an opera house that sank during an earthquake hundreds of years ago. They say a final note was never sung… and that it waits.”

They followed Bernard through twisting alleys and onto a small gondola that took them to a ruined garden tucked behind crumbling stone walls.

There was a marble statue of a masked opera singer, her mouth frozen in song. And beneath her feet: steps, half-covered in vines, leading underground.

The group descended into a forgotten amphitheatre, lit only by torchlight and their own nervous breaths. The echo of past applause still hung in the stale air.

On the stage sat a single, ancient piano.

As Jack approached, the pouch vibrated. A marble was near.

Imogen brushed dust from the piano’s keys and found an inscription:

"Play the final note unplayed,
Let silence finish what it made.
Strike only one, and strike it true,
Or be lost in song with those who knew."

Jack stared at the keys. Most were cracked, some missing… but one — one shimmered.

He pressed it.

A single note echoed through the hall — soft, then louder, then into a full chorus of ghostly harmony. And then silence. And then…

A compartment opened in the floor. Inside lay a sleek, smooth marble glowing with polished metallic stripes and the faint scent of theatre dust.

BONKA BONKA

“It’s elegant,” Imogen whispered.

Bernard sniffed it. “Bonka Bonka is sharp-witted. She’s a marble of memory. She can replay echoes of any moment she’s witnessed.”

Jack held her gently.

Pop!

The pouch shimmered once again.

Jack looked up. “We’re starting to build something here.” “Yeah,” said Lenny. “A marble army.”

“And a reason to never stop,” added Jack. “Let’s go. The next one’s waiting.”

Chapter 4: *Jack and the Oracle of the Marble Mount*

ARIMUS

The Acropolis rose above Athens like a crown of stone. Sunlight bathed the Parthenon in a golden glow as tourists milled about, snapping selfies and licking melting ice creams. But Jack and the others weren't here for the views.

They were here for a prophecy. Bernard sniffed the wind. "There's a place beyond the ruins, a forgotten path once walked by oracles — keep your eyes open."

They hiked beyond the main sites, down a trail overgrown with olive trees and wild herbs. The sound of the city faded. The marble pouch began to hum softly at Jack's side.

Soon, they came to a stone doorway carved into a hillside. The inscription was ancient Greek, but the moment Jack touched the frame, it shimmered and translated itself:

"He who seeks the voice of time,
Must climb the steps where echoes rhyme.
The marble waits where questions cease,
Guarded by an owl, in perfect peace."

"An owl?" asked Ollie. "Are we looking for a bird or a statue?"

"Could be either," Imogen said, already sketching the doorway.

Inside, the chamber was silent except for the soft flutter of bat wings. The stone steps led them downward into a round temple lined with broken columns.

At the centre stood a marble pedestal, and perched on top of it was a weathered owl statue. One of its eyes was missing.

Jack leaned in. "What do you think we're supposed to do?"

Lenny pointed. "That groove in its eye socket — looks like it's waiting for something."

Jack reached into the pouch.

A marble rose out on its own — one none of them had seen before.

ARIMUS

It swirled with bronze and white, like a miniature planet in motion. As Jack held it up, the owl's eye socket pulled it in with a soft *click*.

Suddenly, the owl's beak opened, and a voice echoed from deep within the temple:

"To ask the future is to shape it. To walk the path is to forge it. Let this marble be your sight when all else is shadow."

The floor beneath them trembled. A hidden alcove opened at the owl's feet.

Jack reached in and retrieved the marble, now glowing faintly.

Pop!

Into the pouch it went.

Jack looked around at the ancient walls. "They've been waiting for us." "They?" Lenny asked.

"The marbles," Jack said. "Each one… they're alive in some way. And they remember."

Imogen flipped her notebook shut. "Where to next?"

Bernard grinned. "A place of pharaohs and pyramids."

"Egypt," Jack nodded. "Let's go."

Chapter 5: *Jack and the Pyramid of Secrets*

ONE EYE

The heat was intense as the group stepped off the bus in Giza, Egypt. The sun blazed overhead, casting long shadows across the sands. In the distance, the Great Pyramid stood like a stone giant watching over time itself.

Bernard's paws barely touched the burning ground as he trotted ahead. "We're not going in the main pyramid," he barked. "There's one they don't put on maps."

Jack, Lenny, Ollie, and Imogen followed, dodging camels and tourists as Bernard led them through a crevice in the rocks. A steep path revealed a smaller, sand-covered pyramid hidden from view.

At its entrance was a door carved into stone, half-buried and sealed with ancient symbols.

Imogen brushed away the sand and read the inscription aloud:

"He who walks without light
Shall see the path through ancient sight.
Place the eye where none remain,
To free the marble once again."

"Another riddle," Lenny muttered.

"An eye…" Jack looked around, then instinctively touched the pouch.

A faint tug.

The pouch glowed, and a single marble floated upward.

ONE EYE

It was jet black with a single golden swirl, like a pupil staring back at him.

Bernard stepped aside. "She sees everything. Even what others cannot."

Jack placed One Eye into the center of the door.

Click.

The pyramid rumbled, and the stone door slowly slid open.

Inside, it was pitch black.

Jack took a deep breath and stepped in.

As soon as he crossed the threshold, the marble's glow lit up the chamber — revealing thousands of carvings all over the walls. They told stories… of ancient creatures, forgotten kings… and marbles.

"The Egyptians knew about the Marble Kingdom?" Imogen whispered, astonished.

At the end of the chamber, a pedestal rose from the ground. Sitting on it: a scroll wrapped in gold leaf, and beneath it, a hollow where the marble had rested long ago.

Jack picked up the scroll. The moment he did, the marble zipped back into the pouch.

Pop!

Inside it went.

The scroll unfurled on its own. It showed a map of the world — with 93 glowing dots still to find.

And one of them… was blinking.

Bernard sniffed it. "We're going to Thailand next."

Jack nodded. "Let's go. The adventure's just getting started."

Chapter 6: *Jack and the Jungle Temple of Thailand*

CAMOWAN

The air in Thailand was thick with heat and the scent of blooming flowers. Palm trees swayed above them as the group arrived in the heart of the Thai jungle, led by a local guide who disappeared as mysteriously as he had appeared.

"Bernard," Jack said, brushing sweat from his brow, "you sure this is the place?"

The dog gave a firm nod. "We're looking for a temple hidden in the trees. It only appears when the right marble draws near."

Ollie pointed ahead. "What about that carving?"

They pushed through the dense foliage to reveal a moss-covered stone wall etched with ancient Thai script. Bernard translated:

"From the paws of the tiger, and wings of the bird,
Seek the silence where none are heard.
Call the guardian who guards the flame,
And whisper low the marble's name."

Imogen pulled out her notebook. "What marble are we even looking for?"

The pouch in Jack's jacket began to glow.

This time, instead of a marble floating upward, it rolled right out and landed in his palm.

CAMOWAN

Swirled with greens, browns, and tiger stripes, the marble felt warm — alive. Jack blinked and for a moment, thought he saw eyes inside it.

Bernard lowered his voice. "Camowan is the jungle's shadow. She blends, protects, and only answers to the quiet heart."

The group stepped into the clearing as vines parted on their own. A hidden staircase led downward into the belly of an ancient stone temple.

The air was cool and filled with the soft sound of flutes — though no one was playing.

As they descended, murals lit up along the walls — showing children with glowing marbles protecting entire villages from shadowy beasts.

In the final chamber stood a large stone tiger with a hollow in its chest.

Jack placed Camowan into the socket.

Nothing happened. Until…The tiger blinked.

With a deep rumble, the statue leaned forward and whispered in Thai, a soft voice no louder than breath:

"Your path is clear. Your heart is true.
Camowan belongs with you."

The marble shimmered and launched into the air, flipping back into Jack's pouch.

Pop!

"Whoa," said Lenny. "We just got permission from a stone tiger."

"And we didn't even get eaten," Ollie added. Jack smiled. "Let's keep moving."

Bernard's tail wagged. "Next stop: the rooftops of Rio."

Chapter 7: *Jack and the Rooftop Carnival of Brazil*

SPAZZY RAY

They arrived in Rio just in time for Carnival.

Music filled the streets. People danced in feathered costumes, fireworks popped in the sky, and every corner seemed to burst with colour. Jack, Lenny, Ollie, and Imogen stood in awe, their marble pouch pulsing with excitement.

Bernard trotted ahead wearing a tiny carnival mask. “Don’t let the party distract you — the marble’s hidden high above. Rooftop level.”

Ollie stuffed another brigadeiro into his mouth. “So... no time for snacks?”

“Definitely no time for snacks,” Lenny muttered, pulling him along.

They zig-zagged through alleyways until they reached a crumbling stone stairwell behind an old samba theatre. Bernard barked, and Jack followed him up, higher and higher until they reached a rooftop covered in graffiti — colourful, detailed, and one mural in particular stood out.

A swirling golden sun with a single eye in its centre.

“It’s got to be here,” Jack said, and just then, the pouch began to glow.

Imogen pointed at the base of the mural. “There’s something carved into the tiles!”

They crouched down to read:

"Among the music, sun and beat,
Lies rhythm none can see or meet.
Tap the heart that holds the tune,
And lift the marble with the moon."

“Tap the heart?” Ollie looked around. “Like... drum rhythm?”

Lenny grabbed a nearby empty oil drum. “It’s worth a try.”

He tapped in time with the music coming from the parade below. Slowly, the golden eye on the mural began to spin. A hatch popped open on the rooftop.

Inside, nestled within the concrete, was a marble glowing with vibrant reds, oranges, and golds — shimmering like fire in rhythm.

SPAZZY RAY

Jack picked it up. It pulsed with each beat from the street below.

Bernard grinned. “Spazzy Ray — full of energy, rhythm, and surprises. He can unleash sonic pulses to break illusions and reveal what’s hidden.”

“Useful,” Jack said, admiring the way the marble seemed to move even when still.

Pop!

It zipped into the pouch. Then suddenly — *BOOM!*

A firework lit up the sky directly above them. In that moment, Jack looked down over Rio — the people, the sound, the joy — and knew this was only the beginning.

Imogen closed her notebook. “Where next?”

Bernard sniffed the marble pouch. “Miami.”

Jack raised an eyebrow. “America?”

Bernard’s tail wagged. “And a marble surrounded by neon, art... and mystery.”

Chapter 8: *Jack and the Art Deco Marble of Miami*

ART DECO

The moment they stepped off the plane in Miami, the city buzzed with colour. Pastel buildings lined the streets, palm trees swayed in the sea breeze, and everywhere they turned, neon signs flickered like glowing breadcrumbs.

Bernard padded across the sunlit pavement. “The marble we’re looking for was lost in the 1930s — last seen during an Art Deco gala at a famous hotel that no longer exists.”

Imogen opened her travel journal. “If the hotel’s gone, how do we find it?”

“It’s not the hotel that matters,” Bernard replied. “It’s the art. The marble hides in the design.”

They followed him down Ocean Drive to a gallery of restored Art Deco buildings. Their destination: a small museum featuring Miami’s architectural history. Inside, sleek curves, chrome trim, and pastel light displays danced across the walls.

The pouch at Jack’s side began to pulse.

He stepped toward a wall-sized mosaic — swirling geometric patterns with gold, coral, and turquoise inlays.

Ollie gasped. “It’s shaped like a—” “Marble,” Jack finished, pressing his hand to the centre.

A soft *click* echoed through the gallery. The wall shifted inward, revealing a hidden chamber lit by soft blue light. At the centre stood a display case. Inside, hovering just above the pedestal:

ART DECO

The marble was stunning — a flawless orb patterned with rose gold and aquamarine spirals. Tiny flecks of mother-of-pearl shimmered inside it, casting shifting reflections across the room.

Bernard bowed slightly. “Art Deco is one of the Marble Kingdom’s oldest and most stylish. She hides what’s delicate, protects what’s rare. A guardian of elegance.”

Jack reached out, but the moment his fingers touched the glass, the chamber darkened — and a riddle glowed across the walls:

"Not by force, nor sound, nor flame,
But light reflected knows my name.
Shine the path with elegance,
And you shall earn my dance."

Imogen noticed a silver sconce in the shape of a peacock’s fan.

“Reflected light,” she whispered, adjusting the museum’s spotlight toward the wall mosaic. The light split into colours, casting a rainbow onto the glass case.

The marble began to glow — then *poof!* — it vanished from the case.

Jack gasped, looking down. The pouch shimmered and pulsed.

Pop!
ART DECO had joined the collection. “That one felt… graceful,” Jack said softly.

“She’s from a different time,” Bernard replied. “And now she’s with us.”

Lenny checked the pouch. “How many does that make?”

“Ninety,” said Ollie. “To go.”

Bernard wagged his tail. “Next up? The Outback. And a marble lost in red dust and thunder.”

Jack zipped the pouch closed. “Let’s go to Australia.”

Chapter 9: *Jack and the Thunder Under Uluru*

SCORCHED EARTH

The air shimmered with heat as the team stepped out of the 4x4 onto the ochre sands of the Australian Outback. The horizon stretched endlessly, broken only by the mighty presence of **Uluru** — a towering red rock sacred to the Anangu people.

“Whoa…” Ollie blinked up at it. “It’s… alive.”

Jack adjusted his pouch, now feeling heavier. The marbles inside stirred as if sensing something ancient ahead.

Bernard sniffed the scorched wind. “The marble we seek here has slept for centuries — hidden beneath thunder and time.”

They made their way across the desert until they stood at the base of Uluru. The sun beat down relentlessly.

Imogen squinted up at a carving etched into the stone — swirling clouds and a bolt of lightning. Below it, a message faded with age but just readable:

"Where sky meets earth, and thunder sleeps,
Beneath red stone, the secret keeps.
Strike no match, nor speak aloud,
But wait for silence past the cloud."

Suddenly, the wind picked up.

The skies began to darken.

“Storm’s coming,” Lenny muttered.

“No,” Jack whispered. “It’s here.”

They ducked into a cave at the base of Uluru just as thunder rolled across the Outback. Inside, the marble pouch pulsed again — and a new marble floated up, humming with energy.

SCORCHED EARTH

The marble was crimson and gold, with crackling lightning-like lines coursing through it. It hummed with heat, even in Jack’s hand.

Bernard barked low. “Scorched Earth is pure power. She doesn’t break things… she clears paths.”

As lightning flashed outside, the chamber glowed. Deep inside the cave, a wall trembled, revealing a fissure.

Jack stepped forward and placed the marble into the opening.

Thunder boomed — and then silence. The fissure widened, revealing an ancient stone vault. Inside, etched into the walls, were depictions of marbles used in sacred ceremony — guides, protectors, and judges of truth. Jack took a breath. The marble zipped back into his pouch.

Pop!

Bernard wagged his tail. “That was the one I was worried about.”

Ollie blinked. “Why?” “Because once Scorched Earth awakens… the rest are watching.”

As they emerged from the cave, the skies cleared and Uluru shimmered in the sunlight — ancient, timeless, and now aware.

Imogen tucked her pencil behind her ear. “Where next?”

Bernard grinned. “Somewhere icy. Pack your gloves. We’re going to Iceland.”

Chapter 10: *Jack and the Ice Song of Iceland*

WINTER FROSTIES

The plane descended into Reykjavik through a sky streaked with northern lights. As the gang stepped into the crisp air, Bernard shook his fur dramatically. “Much better,” he barked. “You can smell the magic in the cold.”

Ollie zipped up his coat to his nose. “You can also smell the fish.”

They were heading north — deep into Iceland’s volcanic valleys and icy plateaus. The goal? A marble hidden beneath a glacier known only by locals as *Hrafnlag*, or “Raven’s Veil.”

The pouch at Jack’s side gave off a strange chill.

“This one’s powerful,” Bernard warned as they trekked over frostbitten rocks. “It’s guarded by a song no one remembers — a melody frozen in time.”

Eventually, they reached the foot of the glacier. Etched into the blue ice was a swirling pattern — a single line of ancient runes glowing softly.

Imogen stepped forward. “It’s a riddle…”

"To summon truth from frozen breath,
Sing the sound that stirs the depth.
But sing it not with voice or chord —
Play the silence once ignored."

“What does that even mean?” Lenny muttered. “Play… silence?”

Suddenly, Jack noticed a set of ice chimes carved into the frozen rock — silent, motionless.

Without thinking, he reached into the pouch. A marble rose out, spinning slowly with frosted trails swirling behind it.

WINTER FROSTIES

The marble sparkled like a snowflake caught in moonlight. It seemed to absorb sound — the world grew quiet in its presence.

“Winter Frosties doesn’t make noise,” Bernard said softly. “She silences noise. She brings peace, clarity… and sometimes… revelations.”

Jack raised the marble and held it toward the frozen chimes.

The moment it passed between them, they began to shimmer… then ring — not loudly, but in delicate crystalline tones.

The glacier cracked open just a little. Enough to reveal a shallow cave filled with icy murals and a pedestal carved with ravens and snow.

Jack placed the marble into the centre.

The air turned perfectly still.

Then— *Pop!*
Winter Frosties reappeared inside the pouch, glittering like frost on glass.

Outside, the northern lights swirled more brightly than before.

“Even the auroras know we’re here,” Imogen whispered.

Jack looked to Bernard. “Where to next?”

Bernard grinned. “Let’s warm up. Morocco’s calling.”

Chapter 11: *Jack and the Mirage of Marrakesh*

PEANUT

The streets of Marrakesh buzzed with life — merchants calling out from market stalls, spices perfuming the air, snake charmers playing haunting tunes near baskets that twitched. It was wild, vibrant… and completely overwhelming for Ollie.

“Too many smells,” he muttered, clutching his nose.

“Too many scarves,” Lenny added, his arms tangled in a colourful stall display.

Bernard barked once. “Focus. We’re not here to shop. There’s a marble in the desert — but the trail starts here.”

He led them into a quiet alley just behind the bustling Jemaa el-Fnaa square, where an ancient well sat hidden beneath climbing jasmine vines. On the stone rim was a message carved in weather-worn Arabic, now glowing faintly:

"The marble rides where mirage flows,
In shifting sands where no one goes.
Follow the sun to whisper’s end,
Where truth and trick no longer bend."

“Mirage?” Imogen repeated. “So… an illusion?”

Jack looked into the well. Nothing.

But when the pouch began to shimmer, they heard the soft sound of wind whistling through dunes.

“Desert time,” Bernard said. “Pack water.”

They travelled by camel across the dunes of the Agafay Desert, heat shimmering all around. Hours passed with no sign of anything unusual — until Jack’s pouch tugged him toward a distant dune shaped like a crescent moon.

As they climbed it, the air shimmered — and suddenly, the landscape changed. Where there had been only sand, now stood a small ancient ruin, half-buried.

The door opened as if expecting them. Inside, sunlight filtered through cracks in the walls. On a pedestal in the centre of the room sat a marble — glimmering gold, bronze, and rust red.

PEANUT

The marble shimmered like heat itself. Looking at it felt like staring through a veil.

“It’s not solid,” Ollie said, reaching for it. His hand passed through it.

Bernard nodded. “Peanut only reveals its true form when the seeker speaks the truth they’ve been hiding.”

Everyone went quiet. Then Jack took a breath. “I’m scared we won’t finish this. That I’m not enough for this mission.” The marble solidified.

Jack picked it up gently, its surface warm and pulsing.

Pop!

Into the pouch it went, and the mirage around them faded — the temple gone, the dune normal again.

Lenny put a hand on Jack’s shoulder. “You’re enough. We’re all in this together.”

Bernard wagged his tail. “Next stop: Japan. Ancient forests. Silent shrines. And a marble unlike any you’ve seen before.”

Chapter 12: *Jack and the Spirit of the Silent Shrine*

KATY KATY

The train ride through the Japanese countryside was quiet. Cherry blossoms danced in the breeze outside the windows, and Bernard—sitting beside Jack with a paper fan on his head—gave a rare, respectful silence.

They had arrived in **Kyoto**, home to a thousand shrines.

“Which one’s ours?” asked Ollie, sipping green tea he didn’t like but was too polite to say so.

Bernard didn’t answer. Instead, he led them off the train, through narrow alleyways, and deep into the mist-covered woods of **Mount Kurama**.

After nearly an hour of hiking stone steps, they arrived at a shrine that didn’t appear on any map. Vines crawled over red-painted torii gates, and fox statues guarded the entry — eyes narrowed as if they truly watched.

Above the gate, a message shimmered into view:

"Where silence sleeps and bells don't ring,
A marble waits for truth to sing.
Bow once, then twice — but do not speak.
For voice may vanish if you’re weak."

“That’s creepy,” Ollie whispered.

“Then maybe don’t whisper,” said Lenny.

Jack stepped forward and did exactly as instructed: bow once… then twice.

The air shifted. The shrine doors creaked open on their own.

Inside, a single bell hung in the centre — untouched. Beneath it: a simple mat, and a small wooden box with ancient Japanese writing carved across the lid.

As Jack knelt, the pouch warmed. A marble rose into the air, but unlike the others, this one didn’t glow.

It… *hovered.*

KATY KATY

It was soft pink with faded cherry blossom patterns inside, gentle and still. A marble of patience.

Bernard’s voice was low. “Katy Katy is a guardian of stillness. She waits. Watches. She reminds us that action is not always loud.”

Jack bowed to the marble.

And in return, the marble bowed back.

Pop!

Into the pouch it slipped, without a sound.

As they left the shrine, the wind picked up — and for a brief moment, every torii gate along the path shimmered… as if saying thank you.

Imogen flipped her notebook shut. “Where next?”

Bernard’s tail wagged. “We head to Kenya. Where savannah meets stars… and the next marble roars.”

Chapter 13: *Jack and the Roar Beneath the Stars*

PADDYWACK

The team landed in **Nairobi** just as the sun dipped behind the horizon, painting the sky in orange and crimson. Jack leaned on the railing of their safari lodge, watching giraffes in the distance while the pouch at his side stirred restlessly.

Bernard sniffed the warm wind. “There’s a marble here — deep in the **Maasai Mara**. One that can only be found when the lion sings.”

“Lions don’t sing,” Ollie said.

“Then it’ll be a very short chapter,” Lenny muttered, zipping his hoodie.

The next morning, they set off in a jeep across the wide, open plains. Wildebeest herds moved like rivers in the distance. Imogen took notes, sketching birds and tracks as they passed.

At a rocky outcrop known locally as the “Sleeping Stone,” Bernard leapt down and pawed at a series of scratches in the stone.

A faint glow appeared, etching words into the rock:

"When the sky burns red and drums go still,
Let the marble hear your will.
Call the roar that breaks the night,
And light the path with heart, not sight."

That evening, as twilight settled and the stars emerged in their millions, Jack stood before the stone, holding the pouch.

It pulsed once.

Then… *Rrrrrooooooaaaaarrr!*

A lion’s call echoed across the plains — strong, wild, and ancient.

And from beneath the stone, a crack appeared.

Inside the hollow: a marble unlike any they’d seen so far.

PADDYWACK

Deep golden with faint patterns like lion fur and a sparkle like starlight, the marble vibrated with strength and pride.

Bernard bowed. “Paddywack is the marble of courage. He defends, protects, and never backs down — even in the darkest night.”

Jack held it up. “Feels… steady. Like it knows what we’re up against.”

Pop!
Paddywack disappeared into the pouch with a low, echoing hum — like the growl of something big and watchful.

The group sat in silence under the stars.

“Where now?” Imogen finally asked, eyes still on the sky.

Bernard looked north. “To a land of myths and mountains. We go… to Nepal.”

Chapter 14: *Jack and the Temple in the Clouds*

ICE FROSTIES

The cold hit differently in Nepal — not sharp like Iceland, but quiet. Sacred. The team stood at the base of the Himalayas, wrapped in scarves and wonder.

“That’s Mount Annapurna,” Imogen said, flipping through her notebook. “And the temple we’re looking for… it’s supposed to be unreachable.”

“Perfect,” muttered Lenny.

Bernard barked softly. “Not unreachable. Just forgotten.”

Their journey led them on a winding trail through villages painted with prayer flags and past monks who smiled with knowing eyes. The pouch on Jack’s hip began to hum, its glow barely visible under his thick jacket.

After two days of hiking, they reached a ledge that opened into a narrow pass. At its end stood an ancient gate carved into the mountainside. Words shimmered across it in soft golden light:

"Above the earth, beneath the breath,
A marble waits in silent depth.
No voice, no hand, no open eye —
Only those who still can try."

The wind died as they entered.

The inside was carved entirely from crystal stone. Prayer wheels lined the path, though none spun. In the center, atop a floating lotus carved from white jade, hovered a marble suspended in the air.

ICE FROSTIES

Swirled with white, sky blue, and pale silver, the marble seemed frozen mid-breath — like a snowflake too delicate to fall.

Jack reached forward, but the marble didn’t move.

Bernard whispered, “Ice Frosties will not come to strength. Only stillness.”

Jack dropped to his knees. The others followed, bowing their heads and letting the cold settle.

Silence.

Wind.

Stillness.

Then — a low chime echoed from the mountain walls. The marble drifted downward, resting softly in Jack’s open palm.

“She chose you,” Bernard said quietly.

Pop!

The marble slipped into the pouch, the temperature immediately softening around them.

Jack exhaled, his breath visible. “I think these marbles are more than magic.”

“They’re memories,” Imogen said, eyes wide. “Pieces of something… older.”

Lenny stood up. “Alright. Who’s next on the marble world tour?”

Bernard grinned. “Time for sand again. Pack your shades. We’re off to Jordan.”

Chapter 15: *Jack and the Secrets of Petra*

FORGET ME NOT

Jordan's desert was like a furnace by day and a velvet sea of stars by night. Jack and the team arrived in the city of **Wadi Musa**, gateway to the ancient marvel of **Petra**, carved into rose-red cliffs more than two thousand years ago.

They rode on donkeys past towering rock faces and crumbled tombs, until at last, the great Treasury of Petra appeared — glowing orange in the late afternoon sun.

"Wow," breathed Ollie. "This place looks like it was carved by giants."

"Maybe it was," Bernard said, tail wagging. "The marble here isn't hidden behind walls. It's hidden beneath stories."

Imogen stepped forward, squinting at the carved columns. "I think I see writing between the cracks."

Lenny brushed away dust to reveal a faint inscription:

"Within the walls where kings once slept,
A secret marble silence kept.
To pass the test, speak not of gold —
But tell a tale that's never told."

They explored the carved city, searching chambers and caves — but it wasn't until Jack sat inside the darkened tomb of a former priest-king that the pouch began to glow again.

This time, it pulsed with a heartbeat.

From the pouch floated a marble rougher than the rest — sandy-coloured, speckled with dark stone, and glowing from within like embers beneath ashes.

FORGET ME NOT

Its surface was carved with a single, swirling pattern — the symbol of memory.

Bernard's tone changed. "This marble stores lost tales. Forgotten voices. It listens… and remembers what the world tries to bury."

Jack stepped into the centre of the chamber and did what the inscription asked — he told a story.

Not one of glory or treasure, but one of someone long forgotten — a girl who once swept this tomb, who left a message in a wall crack, who hoped someone someday would remember her.

The walls shimmered. The air thickened with the smell of date trees and sand.

The marble pulsed once and *pop!* — slipped back into the pouch.

A breeze swept through the chamber, whispering across the stone:
"She remembers now."

Jack looked up at the ancient ceiling. "So many stories we don't know."

"Not anymore," said Imogen. "One marble at a time."

Bernard stood. "Pack your boots. The next one waits in the mountains of Peru."

Chapter 16: *Jack and the Echoes of Machu Picchu*

PLANET SIGGY

The sky above **Machu Picchu** was an endless dome of blue. Jack stood on the ancient terraces, high above the Urubamba River, the wind tugging gently at his hoodie.

They'd hiked for hours through thick forest and misty mountain air to reach the sacred city — and now it stood before them like a dream in stone.

"This place is amazing," Imogen whispered, sketching furiously. "It's like we've stepped back in time."

"Or stepped into a memory," Jack said.

Bernard's ears twitched. "That's not far from the truth. The marble we seek here is tied to the Incas themselves. It listens. It waits. And it echoes the past."

The pouch pulsed, then glowed brightly.

Suddenly, a distant drumbeat echoed through the ruins — faint, but steady.

They followed it to the **Temple of the Sun**, a curved wall of stone positioned perfectly to greet the morning light. Inside the chamber, golden rays slipped through a tiny window, landing on a raised stone disk.

Etched into the floor beneath the light was a riddle:

"The sun may rise, but time stands still,
Until the marble feels the will.
Strike not with voice, nor touch, nor flame —
But with a name none can reclaim."

Lenny frowned. "What's that supposed to mean?" Jack looked at the pouch.

A marble floated upward — heavier than the others, dark gold with a spiral at its centre, like a swirling vortex.

PLANET SIGGY

It shimmered with faint purple hues, like the sun rising behind a cloud. When Jack held it up to the light, the marble seemed to absorb the rays and reflect them back as shadow.

"Planet Siggy was the marble of timekeepers," Bernard said. "It hears echoes of what was… and protects what must not be changed."

Imogen looked at the inscription again. "We need to speak a name that's been lost?"

Jack hesitated, then closed his eyes. In a whisper, he said the name he'd read on a weathered stone a mile back:
"Amauta." The word for a forgotten Inca philosopher.

The room darkened. The marble dropped from Jack's hand, hovered above the altar, then *pop!* — vanished into the pouch.

A low voice echoed through the chamber: *"You have remembered what we forgot."*

The sun outside broke through the clouds.

Jack stepped outside, staring across the Andes. "We're not just collecting these marbles. We're restoring something that was broken."

Bernard nodded. "And we're far from done." Ollie held up the map. "Next stop?"

Bernard grinned. "South Africa. A marble buried in gold… and guarded by a shadow."

Chapter 17: *Jack and the Marble Beneath the Mine*

DARK UNIVERSE

The plane touched down in **Johannesburg**, South Africa, just as the sun dipped behind the highveld. The city shimmered with life, but beneath its shining towers and busy streets, the team knew something much older waited.

Bernard sniffed the cool evening air. “We’re headed below. Way below.”

They followed him to the edge of an abandoned gold mine just outside the city. A rusted sign warned: *No Entry — Mine Sealed.* But Bernard pushed his paw against a stone in the wall, and a hidden door creaked open.

Inside, dust danced in the shaft of their torches. Jack’s pouch began to glow.

They descended deeper and deeper — down old wooden steps, past tracks twisted with time, until they entered a narrow cavern, where golden flecks shimmered in the walls like frozen sparks.

A stone tablet stood in the centre. Glowing words emerged:

"Where sun forgets and stone remembers,
Beneath the gold, the fire embers.
Call the guardian without a face,
To find the marble in this place."

Lenny held up a torch. “Guardian without a face?”

Bernard turned slowly. “We’re not alone.”

A faint growl echoed through the mine. From the shadows stepped a tall figure carved entirely from obsidian — no eyes, no mouth, only smooth stone and ancient presence.

It stepped aside.

Revealing a golden pedestal.

Resting on it: a dark, metallic marble, coated in flecks of gold dust and swirling black.

DARK UNIVERSE

Jack stepped forward. The marble seemed to absorb all light, and yet it pulsed faintly, as if a tiny star lived within it.

Bernard bowed low. “Dark Universe is the watcher. The silent protector. She sees everything but speaks only when truth is blurred.”

Jack picked it up.

The moment he did, the guardian raised its hand.

The walls lit up with symbols — stars, galaxies, suns collapsing into void. A warning… or a story?

Then, the marble pulsed in Jack’s hand and *pop!* — slipped into the pouch.

The glow faded. The guardian vanished.

“So… that happened,” Ollie muttered.

“Every one of these marbles is watching something,” Jack said softly. “And someone doesn’t want us collecting them all.”

Bernard growled. “They’re waking up. Which means we need to move faster.”

Imogen pointed at the map. “Next up?”

Bernard’s eyes twinkled. “Greece was just the beginning. Now we go east — to Turkey.”

Chapter 18: *Jack and the Fire Below Cappadocia*

DRAGON FIRE

The morning air over **Cappadocia** was cool and crisp. Hot-air balloons drifted across the sky like colourful marbles themselves. Jack watched them from the balcony of their small inn, the pouch at his side glowing softly.

“We’re not flying today, are we?” Ollie asked nervously, eyes on the sky.

Bernard chuckled. “No flying. We’re going underground.”

They travelled to the edge of **Derinkuyu**, one of the oldest underground cities in the world. A maze of tunnels and chambers carved deep beneath the earth by ancient hands.

“People used to live down there?” Lenny asked, peering into the stone entrance.

“For centuries,” Imogen replied. “And some say… they still do.”

The pouch tugged again.

As they descended into the darkness, lit only by lanterns, the silence grew deeper. At the third level down, Jack paused. Symbols etched into the walls began to shimmer faintly — as if recognizing him.

A stone tablet glowed to life, displaying a riddle:

"Where fire sleeps and shadows dance,
A marble lies within the trance.
Speak no flame, but bring the heat,
And light the heart beneath your feet."

Bernard barked once. “It’s a test of warmth, not fire.”

They reached a circular chamber with a fire pit long extinguished. In the centre was a sealed stone plate — no keyhole, no handle. Just… cold.

Jack reached into the pouch. A marble emerged — pulsing with a deep, flickering glow.

DRAGON FIRE

It was crimson with swirling orange and black veins, like lava caged in glass. It throbbed with heat, though Jack felt no burn.

“Dragon Fire,” Bernard whispered. “A marble of protection, power, and controlled fury. Used by the ancient guardians of the Marble Kingdom.” Jack lowered the marble to the stone plate. Nothing.

Until he spoke, softly. “I won’t use you to destroy. Only to protect.” *BOOM!*

The plate split apart, revealing a glowing symbol carved into the ground — a fire rune from a lost language.

Pop!
Dragon Fire slipped into the pouch with a burst of warm light.

The walls of the chamber pulsed, then faded to darkness again.

As they emerged from the tunnels, the wind picked up and the sky shimmered.

“That one felt… alive,” said Jack. “It was,” Bernard replied. “And now it’s yours.”

Imogen unfolded the map. “Next destination?”

Bernard wagged his tail. “Somewhere ancient. Somewhere blue. We’re going to Morocco’s northern neighbour — Spain.”

Chapter 19: *Jack and the Flamenco Marble of Seville*

TWISTY PEACOCKS

The streets of **Seville** came alive at twilight.

Music spilled from taverns, heels tapped in sync with guitars, and lanterns swayed over tiled courtyards where locals danced the **flamenco** — fiery, bold, and full of soul.

Jack stood watching in awe. “It’s like the marble’s already here,” he whispered, as the pouch pulsed against his hip.

Bernard led the group through narrow alleys to a weathered building behind the old Alcázar palace — a long-abandoned theatre with faded murals of dancers painted across its crumbling walls.

On the dusty stage inside sat a single chair, and on the back wall, carved into the stone, was a passage now glowing faintly:

"Where passion strikes and silence ends,
The marble waits where rhythm bends.
Clap not for joy, nor stamp for fame —
But dance the truth and speak its name."

“It wants us to dance?” Ollie blinked. “Please tell me we brought Lenny’s castanets.”

Lenny sighed. “I have very complicated feet, alright?”

Imogen grinned and stepped onto the stage. “Maybe it’s not about being good — maybe it’s about meaning it.”

She began to move — slowly, then with confidence — letting the rhythm in her heart guide her feet.

Jack joined her, then Ollie, and even Lenny followed suit, awkward but committed.

As the final stomp echoed off the stone walls, the pouch burst with light.

A marble rose into the air — twirling in midair as if dancing on its own.

TWISTY PEACOCKS

It was vibrant — fiery reds, blues, and greens spinning like silk in motion. When it hovered in Jack’s hand, they all felt a pulse of joy… and defiance.

“Twisty Peacocks is a marble of celebration,” Bernard said. “But not for fun — for freedom. She reminds us of what it means to move, to resist, to live.”

Jack bowed. The marble spun once… then *pop!* — disappeared into the pouch.

“That one was fun,” Lenny admitted. “I didn’t even trip.”

“Much,” Ollie teased.

As they stepped into the courtyard, the music picked up again — faster, brighter, fuller — as if the city itself had joined their dance.

Imogen opened the map. “Who’s next?”

Bernard’s tail swayed like a conductor’s baton. “Hungary. And a marble sealed beneath the Danube’s rhythm.”

Chapter 20: *Jack and the Marble Under the Danube*

BLUE WAVE

Budapest was more beautiful than Jack had imagined — old-world charm with new-world energy. Bridges arched over the **Danube River**, connecting Buda and Pest like a silver thread. Trams rattled along cobbled streets, and domed buildings caught the golden light of morning.

“Looks like something out of a dream,” said Imogen, snapping photos along the **Chain Bridge**.

“It’s what’s under the dream that we’re looking for,” Bernard said, nodding toward the river.

They descended into a maze of ancient **thermal baths**, steam rising from stone pools. Below them, the city hummed with unseen magic. Bernard’s ears twitched as they reached a hidden door beneath a Roman-style pool marked with a symbol — a spiral wrapped in waves.

On the wall next to it, words shimmered through the steam:

"The river flows and time stands still,
But one will rise who holds the will.
When water sings and silence drops,
The marble wakes where echo stops."

“Where echo stops?” Lenny asked. “So... what? Sing underwater?”

“I think,” Jack said, “we have to listen.”

They stepped into a long, silent tunnel beneath the baths. The deeper they went, the quieter it got — until even the sound of dripping water vanished.

Suddenly, the pouch flared with a cool glow.

A marble floated up — pale blue and silver, with rippling patterns like water dancing in moonlight.

BLUE WAVE

The air shifted. The tunnel filled with a soft hum, like a distant lullaby.

“Blue Wave listens,” Bernard whispered. “She carries messages through water — across oceans, across time. She connects those who cannot speak.”

Jack held the marble in both hands. He didn’t speak. Instead, he closed his eyes… and thought.

He thought of every marble they’d found, every person they’d met, every place they’d walked.

The humming deepened.

Then *pop!*
The marble slipped into the pouch, and the echo returned — louder than ever.

From the far end of the tunnel, a hidden door creaked open.

The way forward.

Bernard turned. “We’ve got a new path. A colder one.”

Imogen checked the map. “Norway?”

Bernard grinned. “Snow, fjords… and a marble that glows in storms.”

Chapter 21: *Jack and the Marble of the Midnight Storm*

HURRICANE CRAIN

The ferry glided through the narrow **fjords of Norway**, flanked by towering cliffs dusted with snow. Above them, the northern lights twisted like magical ribbons through the starry sky.

Jack zipped up his coat as the cold seeped in. “Feels like the kind of place where time forgets to pass.”

Bernard raised his nose to the wind. “That’s because it’s watching us.”

They arrived at a tiny village nestled at the foot of a frozen waterfall. The locals said it had no name — only a legend. A legend about a marble lost in a storm that never ends.

“Sounds… inviting,” Lenny muttered, stomping warmth into his boots.

They followed a trail past the village into the mountains. With each step, the air grew colder. Snowflakes swirled upward instead of falling. The pouch at Jack’s side began to thrum like a heartbeat.

They reached a plateau where the auroras pulsed directly above. In the centre stood a circle of standing stones, ancient and ice-covered. On the central monolith, faint glowing text appeared:

"Where light and frost and thunder meet,
A marble wakes in storm’s heartbeat.
Strike the stone with breath and flame —
And speak aloud the marble’s name."

Ollie blinked. “We don’t know its name though.”

“We’re about to,” said Jack.

The pouch glowed and released a marble — swirling silver and pale blue, with crackling veins of white energy that danced beneath the surface.

HURRICANE CRAIN

Named from your official list — this marble pulsed like a lightning storm trapped inside a snow globe.

“Hurricane Crain is unpredictable,” Bernard said. “She rides the wind and commands the storm. She can’t be forced. She has to trust.”

Jack stepped forward and whispered her name.

The clouds above twisted violently. A bolt of light cracked across the sky, striking the stone with a deafening *BOOM!*

Silence followed.

Then — *Pop!*

The marble disappeared into the pouch, and the storm immediately stopped.

The stars reappeared.

So did the trail back down the mountain.

“Next?” Imogen asked, voice echoing off the cliffs.

Bernard looked east. “We cross to the Baltics. Next stop: Estonia.”

Chapter 22: *Jack and the Forest of Echoes*

GREEN ZOMBY

Estonia was colder than expected — not in temperature, but in silence. As the team wandered through the dense woodland near **Viru Bog**, it felt like the trees were listening.

“This place is spooky,” Ollie muttered.

“Good spooky,” Imogen said, scribbling down runes carved into bark.

Bernard padded quietly, his breath visible in the morning chill. “There’s a marble in this forest. It’s hidden in a forgotten shrine, built before even the earliest Estonian kings.”

The pouch pulsed faintly against Jack’s side. As they crossed a mossy clearing, the sound of birds stopped — everything still. Ahead, a crumbling stone circle stood among the trees.

Jack approached the centre stone. It was cracked, covered in green lichen. As his fingers brushed it, the stone glowed, and writing appeared:

"To find the marble lost to lore,
Stand where none have stood before.
Speak not in sound, but thought alone —
And call the echo to come home."

Lenny looked around. “I think I preferred the lightning storm.”

Ollie whispered, “We’re being watched.”

The forest creaked.

Then… the pouch glowed brightly, and a marble rose from it — patterned in green and grey, swirling with tiny lightning bolts and soft streaks of silver fog.

GREEN ZOMBY

The marble pulsed slowly, like a sleeping forest spirit waking from a long dream.

“Green Zomby is… old,” Bernard said. “It protects ancient places. Places nature has reclaimed. If you treat the land with respect, it will guide you. If not…”

Jack stepped forward and knelt beside the stone.

He didn’t speak.

He just thought:
We remember you.
We will protect what’s left.

The marble flickered once — then *pop!* — slipped into the pouch, and the clearing filled with sound again. Birds. Wind. Leaves.

A soft, distant voice whispered:
"You’re not the first. But you may be the last."

Imogen shivered. “Let’s go before something *else* wakes up.”

Bernard turned toward the road. “Next up: Poland. A marble carved in resistance.”

Chapter 23: *Jack and the Resistance of Kraków*

JUST WILLIAM

The cold cobbled streets of **Kraków** echoed under the team's footsteps. Snowflakes drifted lazily from the sky, dusting the rooftops of ancient buildings and the quiet squares.

They stood at the edge of the **Wawel Castle** courtyard, where centuries of kings had ruled — and where, according to Bernard, a different kind of power once lived.

“This city remembers everything,” Bernard said softly. “It’s held secrets beneath its stones longer than most countries have existed.”

They followed him down a narrow street to a small brick building marked with a simple black plaque. It had once been a resistance hideout during World War II.

Inside was silence.

On the floor, a trapdoor.

Below it, a tunnel — lined with faded posters, broken furniture, and a faint blue glow coming from a stone wall at the far end. Upon that wall, glowing words appeared:

"A marble forged not by flame nor stone,
But in the hearts that stood alone.
Call not for power, nor cry for fame —
But whisper gently: I know your name."

Imogen stepped back. “This marble… it’s not just hidden. It’s protected.”

Jack knelt before the wall. The pouch pulsed again — softly, reverently. A marble floated upward.

JUST WILLIAM

A smooth orb of white, deep blue, and iron grey, it shimmered like a medal worn proudly but quietly. It radiated quiet strength, steadiness — and sorrow.

“Just William stood for those who couldn’t,” Bernard said. “He remembers names long forgotten — and gives courage to those who feel alone.”

Jack lowered his voice. “I know your name,” he whispered.

The wall faded.

Behind it lay nothing… and everything. A hollow echo of courage. And then *pop!* — the marble entered the pouch without a sound.

Outside, church bells rang across Kraków.

Lenny looked toward the sky. “That one felt different.”

“It *was* different,” Jack said. “But it belongs with us now.”

Bernard looked to the south. “And now, it’s time for colour, chaos… and a marble lost in the markets of India.”

Chapter 24: *Jack and the Marble of the Painted Elephants*

RED MINSTRALS

The moment they stepped into **Jaipur**, the air burst with energy — horns blared, spices filled the streets, and every surface seemed painted with a new story.

Ollie's eyes widened. "This place looks like someone spilled a giant packet of sweets across the city."

"It's called the *Pink City* for a reason," Imogen said, pointing at the rose-tinted buildings.

They were heading to the edge of the **Amber Fort**, where Bernard said the next marble had last been seen — during a festival nearly a hundred years ago, when the elephants had painted faces and the marble had been carried on a throne of gold.

As they approached the fort, they passed murals of dancers, warriors, and gods. One small mural near a carved elephant caught Jack's eye — it showed a boy holding a glowing orb, surrounded by cheering crowds.

He touched the wall. It shimmered and revealed glowing script:

"Where colour walks and footsteps sing,
A marble waits in golden ring.
To see its heart, be not too loud —
But dance your way through painted crowd."

"Again with the dancing?" Lenny groaned.

Jack grinned. "No time to be shy."

Bernard led them to the inner courtyard where echoes of music still seemed to drift through the air. And as Jack opened the pouch, a marble slowly floated up — spinning with reds, golds, and streaks of deep purple.

RED MINSTRALS

The marble glowed like a spinning festival drum — rich, rhythmic, alive.

"Red Minstrals is the marble of celebration," Bernard said. "But she doesn't celebrate noise. She honours the rhythm of spirit — joy that comes from truth, not performance."

The group stood quietly. Then Jack clapped his hands slowly, once, twice… then tapped his foot in time.

Imogen added a soft hum.

The marble responded — spinning faster, pulsing with light.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch, and music filled the air once more — not from instruments, but from the stone itself.

Jack smiled. "She's home."

Bernard's ears perked up. "And now we travel far… to Canada. Cold forests. Old lakes. And a marble that only appears in reflection."

Chapter 25: *Jack and the Marble Beneath the Northern Lights*

WHITE COSMICS

The air in **Banff National Park** was crisp and clean, the kind that filled your lungs with life. The mountains stood proud in every direction, and the snow-capped peaks glistened under a pale blue sky.

Jack and the others arrived at the edge of **Lake Louise**, its frozen surface glowing beneath the northern lights that had unexpectedly arrived early this season.

Bernard stepped forward, nose to the wind. “This marble doesn’t lie in stone or snow. It lies in reflection.”

They hiked along the lake’s edge to a quiet cove known by the Cree as *Whispering Mirror*. The sky above danced with green and purple ribbons of light, and in the centre of the clearing stood a wooden totem carved with wolves and owls.

As they drew closer, the frozen lake cracked faintly and a shimmering message appeared on the ice:

"Where sky meets soul and trees stand still,
The marble waits by silent will.
Show your face but not your voice,
And earn the marble’s quiet choice."

Ollie frowned. “Show your face?”

Jack stepped cautiously onto the ice and knelt near the totem, staring down into his own reflection. The stars above spun in the water’s mirror-like surface… and then it changed.

His face faded, replaced by dozens of others — children, animals, creatures… marbles.

The pouch pulsed and released a marble.

WHITE COSMICS

It shimmered like frost and moonlight — speckled with tiny starbursts and cool misty glows. The marble didn’t glow… it *gleamed*.

“White Cosmics connects the inner world with the outer one,” Bernard said. “She sees what’s inside people — who they are when they’re quiet.”

Jack didn’t speak. He simply pressed his palm against the ice and watched the stars shift in the marble’s centre.

Pop!
The marble entered the pouch, and the reflection vanished — leaving only the auroras and the sound of the wind through the trees.

“That one felt personal,” Imogen said softly.

“They all are,” Jack replied.

Bernard looked toward the horizon. “Get ready. The next marble’s buried in the salt flats of Bolivia — and it only appears when the sky touches the earth.”

Chapter 26: *Jack and the Mirror of the World*

PLANET ZIGO

The team stood in stunned silence on the **Salar de Uyuni** — the world's largest salt flat. After the rain, a thin sheet of water had turned the ground into a perfect mirror. The clouds above stretched below their feet. They were walking through the sky.

"This is unreal," Imogen whispered, snapping photo after photo. "I can't tell where the world ends."

"It doesn't here," Bernard said. "That's why the marble chose this place."

Jack walked slowly across the gleaming surface, each step sending ripples across the reflected sky. The pouch began to pulse — not just with warmth, but with clarity.

They reached a low stone monument in the middle of the endless white.

Carved into the salt brick was a simple message, revealed only when Jack brushed his hand across it:

"To find the marble lost in light,
Forget the ground, ignore the height.
Look not down, nor up above —
But see the world through what you love."

Ollie squinted. "That's the most confusing one yet."

Jack looked down. Then up. Then closed his eyes.

And thought of home.

Of Harry. Of playing marbles with his brothers. Of the very first pouch in the park. Of *why* he was on this journey.

The reflection beneath him changed.

The clouds shimmered. And from the sky's mirror rose a marble — half translucent, swirling with cloud-white, lightning blue, and golden-pink streaks like a sunrise.

PLANET ZIGO

It rotated slowly in mid-air, perfectly still despite the breeze.

"Planet Zigo is a mirror," Bernard said, his voice reverent. "Not of what you see — but of what you *are*. She reveals the truth… even when it's hard to face."

Jack reached out. His hand trembled.

The marble dropped into his palm — cold and light.

Then *pop!* — into the pouch it went.

The clouds cleared. The sky above glowed brighter. It felt like the Earth had taken a deep breath and was now, finally, exhaling.

Jack turned. "We go on."

Bernard nodded. "Next stop: Egypt's cousin. We're heading to Sudan."

Chapter 27: *Jack and the Pyramids of the Forgotten Kings*

SIR OSWALD

The desert of **Sudan** was hotter and quieter than Egypt had been. Far fewer tourists. No gift shops. Just sand, stone, and the haunting beauty of ancient **Meroë** — a city of pyramids rising out of the Sahara like sharpened shadows.

Bernard led them across the golden plain toward a smaller, broken pyramid — half-buried and leaning, the top blown off long ago.

“These aren’t just tombs,” he said, sniffing the air. “They’re songs made of stone.”

“What kind of song?” Ollie asked.

“The kind even the wind forgets,” Bernard replied.

At the base of the pyramid, Jack found a narrow doorway carved into the stone. The group ducked inside and found themselves in a single chamber. The walls were covered in symbols — stars, lions, crescents, and suns.

In the centre stood a weathered altar. As Jack approached, words etched themselves into the floor beneath his feet:

"The kings are gone, the crowns are dust,
But one remains who still you trust.
Call not with sound, but with your heart,
And light the flame that bears no spark."

Jack didn’t speak. He placed his hand on the altar and thought about the journey — about the people they’d met, the stories they’d uncovered, and the marbles that had chosen them.

The pouch trembled.

A marble rose slowly from it, shimmering with gold and deep matte black, like obsidian kissed by firelight.

SIR OSWALD

The marble was regal, commanding, and calm. Within its surface, tiny flashes sparkled — not bright, but wise.

“Sir Oswald was a protector,” Bernard said softly. “He watched over leaders, but never ruled. He listened before he spoke. He gives strength to those who *don’t* want power.”

Jack held the marble in his palm. It felt warm, steady — like a promise.

Pop!

Into the pouch it slipped.

The room filled with golden light, and for a moment, the shadows of ancient kings stood tall against the stone walls — not in fear, but in honour.

As the team stepped back into the desert sun, Imogen shielded her eyes. “Where next?”

Bernard raised his head toward the west. “A jungle. A river. And a marble that hears everything. We go to the Congo.”

Chapter 28: *Jack and the Marble of the Whispering River*

GROCASOURAS

The canopy above was so thick, it turned day into dusk. The Congo River twisted like a giant serpent through the trees, and the air was alive with the buzz of insects, the distant calls of monkeys, and the steady beat of tribal drums somewhere beyond the mist.

Jack wiped sweat from his brow. “It’s like walking through a living creature.”

Bernard’s ears twitched. “Because it is. This forest remembers.”

They’d travelled upriver in a carved wooden canoe guided by a local named **Kamba**, who said the marble was hidden where the river spoke — and only those who truly listened could hear it.

After hours of paddling, they arrived at a small clearing surrounded by enormous **kapok trees**. Their roots formed natural arches over the water, and in the centre of the clearing: a single flat stone with carvings nearly erased by time.

As Jack approached, the stone shimmered and revealed a message:

"In jungle deep where none dare go,
A marble listens far below.
Speak not aloud, but let it hear
The silent truth you hold most dear."

Imogen whispered, “It wants… a confession?”

Jack nodded. He sat on the stone and closed his eyes.

He thought about the fear he’d been hiding — the pressure of leading, of always being strong. Of wondering if the pouch would ever be full, or if it would one day reject him.

The pouch warmed.

A marble floated out — dark green, earthy brown, and shimmered with rippling rings like water disturbed in slow motion.

GROCASOURAS

It pulsed like it was breathing — steady, slow, ancient.

“Grocasouras is the jungle’s ear,” Bernard said quietly. “She hears thoughts, even those never spoken. She remembers pain, yes… but she also offers healing.”

Jack opened his hand. The marble landed with a featherlight *pop!* into the pouch.

Suddenly, the forest quieted… then sang.

Birds, frogs, the river — it all harmonised in a natural song that made their hearts beat a little slower.

Jack stood. “Let’s not rush this journey. Some places… you just don’t walk away from too quickly.”

Ollie blinked. “But also, there are giant ants here.”

Bernard grinned. “Fair. Next stop — a frozen fjord. We’re heading to Greenland.”

Chapter 29: *Jack and the Heart of the Glacier*

WHITE DIAMONDS

The wind howled across the frozen cliffs of Greenland's west coast as Jack and the others stepped off the small propeller plane. Before them lay a vast field of blue-white ice, jagged like broken glass beneath a silver sky.

"Now this," Lenny said, breath visible in the air, "makes Norway feel like a beach day."

Imogen wrapped her scarf tighter. "According to the old maps, there's a cave beneath one of these glaciers — one that only opens when the ice sings."

Bernard's ears twitched. "Then we'd better listen."

With the help of a local guide, they snowshoed across the icy terrain until they reached a glacial fissure known as *The Sleeping Mouth*. A narrow gap pulsed with cold wind — and faint sound.

Jack stepped forward. His pouch stirred.

At the entrance to the ice cave, an inscription emerged across the frost-covered wall:

"When silence cracks and echoes call,
A marble waits within the wall.
Strike no flame and speak no lie,
Or risk the marble saying goodbye."

They entered the cave slowly, frost crunching underfoot. Ice crystals sparkled like stars all around them. And deep in the chamber, encased in solid blue ice, was a single glowing orb.

Jack reached into the pouch.

A marble floated out — ghostly white, shot through with veins of icy silver and pale blue. Frost trailed behind it as it moved.

WHITE DIAMONDS

"White Diamonds," Bernard whispered. "One of the oldest. She can freeze time in the tiniest moments — and preserve what would otherwise be lost."

Jack held it up, and the marble pulsed once… then shattered the ice around its twin buried in the glacier.

The echo of a distant voice rang through the cave — not words, just… song.

The marble rejoined the pouch.

Pop!

And the cave pulsed with light before going completely still once more.

Lenny shivered. "Let's get out of here before something else freezes."

As they stepped back into the snowfield, the auroras began to swirl above, dancing across the darkening sky.

Bernard looked south. "Time to warm up. Our next marble lies beneath the sands of Israel."

Chapter 30: *Jack and the Light Beneath Jerusalem*

YELLOW SKIES

Jerusalem glowed gold under the morning sun. Its rooftops shimmered, its ancient walls whispered. The team stood at the edge of the **Mount of Olives**, looking down at the old city like travellers peering into the pages of a living book.

“This place feels… different,” Jack whispered.

“It should,” Bernard replied. “It remembers everything.”

They followed Bernard through narrow stone alleyways, past spice stalls, prayer calls, and towering cathedrals — into the heart of the city.

There, hidden behind the **Western Wall**, past a tiny garden where olive trees bent like they were listening, was a forgotten stone stairwell leading downward.

At the base, they found a sealed stone door. On it, a carving — a hand holding a glowing sphere above a seven-branched menorah.

When Jack touched the carving, the stone glowed and words appeared:

"In sacred stone where silence prays,
A marble glows beneath the days.
Call not with shout or ancient line,
But light a heart through hope divine."

Imogen turned to Jack. “It’s not asking for power. It’s asking for… faith.”

Jack nodded. He reached into the pouch. A marble rose — soft gold and pearl white, swirled with flecks that caught the torchlight like glints of sunrise through stained glass.

YELLOW SKIES

The marble glowed warmly in Jack’s hand — not blinding, not fiery, just… calm. Uplifting. Like the moment between tears and peace.

Bernard’s voice was soft. “Yellow Skies gives courage when none is left. She reminds the forgotten that they matter. She’s the marble of second chances.”

Jack placed it gently onto the ancient altar.

A low hum rose from the stone. The entire room warmed. And in that moment, Jack thought of every person they’d helped. Every place they’d lit up. Every marble now resting inside the pouch.

Then — *pop!*
Yellow Skies vanished into the pouch.

Outside, the bells of the city chimed across cultures and walls.

“That one felt like forgiveness,” Lenny said quietly.

“And now?” Ollie asked, looking across the skyline.

Bernard’s ears perked up. “To the rooftops of Seoul. The city of lights and shadows — and a marble sealed in sound.”

Chapter 31: *Jack and the Song of the Rooftop Fox*

KOOLA WHIP

Seoul pulsed with energy. Giant LED screens flashed over skyscrapers, and street food stalls buzzed with life as music drifted from hidden speakers and open cafés. But somewhere above all the chaos — in the stillness above the noise — a marble was waiting.

Bernard led the group through narrow alleys in the neighbourhood of **Insadong**, where old teahouses nestled between ultra-modern towers.

“We’re not going underground this time,” Bernard said. “We’re going up.”

They climbed a winding fire escape to a flat rooftop above a karaoke bar. Up there, tucked behind potted plants and faded lanterns, was a stone sculpture — a fox curled around a sphere, its nine tails flowing behind it.

On the wall beside it, glowing Korean characters flickered to life:

"Where voices rise and vanish slow,
A marble sings in quiet glow.
Not from the lips, but from the soul —
To free the fox, you must be whole."

“A riddle about singing?” Lenny frowned. “Is this karaoke again?”

Ollie grinned. “Don’t worry. I warmed up in the cab.”

Jack stepped forward. The pouch pulsed.

From it rose a marble — shimmering with pink, violet, and silver streaks, like a shifting melody caught in glass.

KOOLA WHIP

It floated slowly above the rooftop, releasing a soft hum like a lullaby spun from windchimes.

Bernard whispered, “Koola Whip hears the emotions *inside* a song — not the melody, but the meaning. She’s the marble of voice unspoken.”

Jack looked at the marble, then to the fox sculpture. Instead of singing, he simply whispered:
“I’m afraid I’ll lose this. That we’ll find 98… and fail at the last.”

The sculpture shimmered. Its eyes glowed. And with a soft chime, the sphere beneath its paws rose into the air and *merged* with Koola Whip.

Pop!
Into the pouch it went.

The lights of Seoul below flickered brighter — as if the city had heard them and approved.

Bernard stretched. “Let’s cool off a little. The next marble’s on a windswept cliff… in Scotland.”

Chapter 32: *Jack and the Howl of the Highland Wind*

SOFTBALL HEAD

The Scottish Highlands were soaked in grey mist and ancient stories. Jack and the others stood on the cliffs near **Dunnottar Castle**, watching waves crash violently against the rocks far below.

“This place feels like it’s *watching* us,” Imogen said, tightening her coat.

“That’s because it is,” Bernard said. “This land remembers. And it doesn’t give up its marbles easily.”

They walked the crumbling path to the castle ruins — wind tearing at their clothes, sea spray in the air, and gulls circling above like guardians of a long-forgotten secret.

At the highest point of the castle — an old watchtower where battles were once fought — Jack found a circle of runes carved into the stone floor. The pouch at his side began to shake gently in the wind.

Then, across the stones, words appeared in ancient script, glowing faintly:

"Where storm has raged and stones still stand,
A marble sleeps beneath the land.
Speak no boast, nor cry, nor call —
But face the wind, and let it fall."

Ollie blinked. “Let what fall? Ourselves?!”

Jack stepped into the circle and let the wind hit him full-on. He closed his eyes and said nothing — not even a thought, just presence.

The pouch glowed.

A marble rose — deep grey, silver-streaked, etched with a spiral that looked like a storm viewed from above.

SOFTBALL HEAD

The marble was cloudy, soft in its colour — stormy blue, flecked with pale grey like a Scottish sky. It pulsed gently, not violently. Steady, like the hush after a downpour.

Bernard whispered, “Softball Head is misunderstood. Everyone expects lightning — but what it brings is *clarity after chaos*. It doesn’t roar. It *rests*.”

Jack nodded. “Like the moment after a storm.”

The wind stopped.

Complete stillness.

And then — *pop!* — the marble vanished into the pouch.

Jack turned to the sea. “It’s not just about strength. It’s about knowing when to be still.”

Lenny pulled his hood back. “That’s deep. And freezing.”

Bernard sniffed the wind. “Next stop — Egypt’s other side. We’re heading to Tunisia.”

Chapter 33: *Jack and the Mosaic of Shadows*

PLANET MING

Tunisia greeted them with golden light and desert wind.

They had arrived in **El Djem**, home to one of the largest Roman amphitheatres in the world. Its grand arches still stood, defiant against the creeping sands of time. Jack ran his hand along the sun-warmed stone.

“This is bigger than it looks,” Lenny said, tilting his head back.

“And quieter than it should be,” Ollie added.

Bernard led them down a crumbling passageway beneath the arena — the same tunnels where gladiators once waited, silent and terrified. Down here, the walls still echoed with ghosts.

A chamber opened before them, round and domed, its floor covered in broken mosaics. At the centre, a perfectly preserved square tile glowed faintly. When Jack knelt beside it, the pouch began to vibrate softly.

Words swirled across the tile in broken Latin, then settled into English:

"Where shadow danced and sandals fell,
A marble waits where silence dwells.
Unseen by kings, unknown by flame —
The one who claims must know its name."

“I don’t think it wants a guess,” Imogen whispered. “It wants truth.”

Jack reached into the pouch.

A marble emerged — dusty gold, burnt orange, with a swirling core that looked like fire sealed in ancient sand.

PLANET MING

The marble gave off a low hum — not loud, but vibrating with intensity, like a flame that didn’t flicker.

Bernard bowed his head. “Planet Ming is the flame of purpose. She was once used to light the path of fallen warriors. She doesn’t destroy — she remembers.”

Jack stepped forward and placed the marble into the centre of the mosaic.

It glowed.

One tile shifted… then fell into the earth. A soft *pop!* — and the marble reappeared in the pouch.

The chamber filled with warmth. For a moment, they all heard faint cheering… long gone.

Jack looked toward the light above. “We just walked into history.”

Chapter 34: *Jack and the Fire Beneath the Flowers*

DRIPPING STRAWBERRY

The team arrived on the **Big Island of Hawaii** just before sunset. As their jeep climbed the winding road to **Kīlauea**, one of the world's most active volcanoes, plumes of steam danced in the golden light.

Ollie stared out the window. "Are we seriously going into a volcano?"

"Not into it," Bernard said, tail flicking. "Beneath it."

"Oh, that's so much better," Lenny muttered.

They followed an ancient trail through a fern-covered jungle. The deeper they went, the warmer the air became — thick with the scent of volcanic soil and wild orchids. Eventually, they reached a narrow lava tube, half-collapsed and hidden behind a curtain of vines.

Carved into the wall were swirling patterns of fire and water. As Jack brushed away the moss, glowing text emerged:

"Where earth is born and flames still sleep,
A marble stirs in caverns deep.
The one who calls with steady flame,
Will find the heart that speaks no name."

Bernard turned toward Jack. "You'll need to be calm. Volcanoes don't like pride."

Jack stepped into the tunnel. As he walked, the pouch began to heat slightly — not burning, but intense. Something ancient was near.

From within the pouch floated a marble — glowing orange-red, with streaks of obsidian black and golden cracks like lava frozen mid-eruption.

DRIPPING STRAWBERRY
A rare fire-and-fruit-coloured marble: ruby red with bright pink and golden syrupy streaks. It carries the essence of tropical chaos and beauty — a sweet shell hiding deep, fiery wisdom.

From the pouch rose a marble like no other — deep red with bright pink swirls and golden trails that ran like syrup through molten glass.

It pulsed with heat, but also sweetness — like passion balanced by purpose.

Bernard's eyes widened. "Dripping Strawberry is wild. She's unpredictable, but her strength lies in turning destruction into growth. She doesn't fear the flame — she *becomes* it."

Jack held the marble over a stone basin etched into the cave floor.

The ground rumbled softly.

Then *Pop!*
The marble zipped into the pouch, and the rumble faded… leaving behind only peace — and the scent of wild fruit in the warm volcanic air.

"Okay," Lenny said, peeking in. "That one smelled amazing."

Jack turned toward the light at the tunnel's end. "We're nearly halfway."

Bernard nodded slowly. "Next stop — something a little chillier. We're going to Finland."

Chapter 35: Jack and the Whisper in the Pines

MINTOES

The sun never truly rose in **Lapland** — it simply hovered near the horizon, casting long blue shadows across the endless snow. Jack and the others trudged through a fir-covered forest, the only sound being their boots crunching through the frost.

“This place feels… quiet,” Imogen whispered.

“That’s because it’s listening,” Bernard replied.

They were following a narrow trail to a sacred Sami grove known only as **Hiljaisuuden Metsä** — the Forest of Silence. Legend said it was a place where thoughts could be heard and words were often too loud.

In the heart of the grove stood a ring of standing stones, each carved with a different animal. A silver fox. A reindeer. An owl. And one broken stone — split down the centre.

Jack stepped into the circle.

The pouch began to shimmer.

Then a line of glowing runes etched themselves into the snow:

"In pines that sleep and winds that hush,
The marble waits in frost and blush.
Call not the beast with tooth or flame,
But speak with stillness, heart, and name."

Ollie tilted his head. “Wait… we have to say its name?”

“But we don’t know it,” Lenny said. “Unless…”

The pouch trembled.

A marble rose from within — pale mint green and frosted white, with tiny streaks like pine needles frozen in morning light.

MINTOES

It hovered calmly in front of Jack — not hot, not cold, just perfectly still.

Bernard bowed his head. “Mintoes is a marble of clarity and calm. She doesn’t force change — she inspires it. She’s been used in rituals where winter meets spring, where endings begin anew.”

Jack said the name softly:
“Mintoes.”

A gust of wind circled the stones — gentle but strong enough to lift snow into a glowing spiral.

Pop!
The marble slipped into the pouch.

All around them, the forest fell into a silence so pure it echoed.

Then, slowly, the sounds returned — the creak of trees, the flap of distant wings, the crunch of approaching deer. But now everything felt more alive.

“We needed that one,” Jack said. “She was a breath.”

Bernard nodded toward the sky. “Next? Chile. Mountains. Stars. And a marble carved in the shadow of giants.”

Chapter 36: *Jack and the Marble Beneath the Stars*

OUTER SPACE

They stood on the edge of the **Atacama Desert**, the driest place in the world. The sky overhead was already darkening, painted with shades of violet and indigo. As night fell, thousands of stars pierced the darkness — more than Jack had ever seen.

“This feels like space,” Ollie said, spinning slowly.

“It *is* space,” Imogen replied, adjusting her telescope. “Earth is just part of it.”

Bernard looked out across the plateau. “The marble here fell from the sky. Or so the elders say.”

They were heading toward the **ALMA Observatory**, perched high in the mountains. Scientists came here to listen to the universe. But Jack and the team were listening for something older than radio waves — something buried in starlight.

They reached a stone dome not open to the public — abandoned, cracked, and silent.

Inside, a carved disc rested in the floor. At its centre, a pattern of constellations glowed faintly.

The pouch vibrated.

Then words, written in light across the floor:

"The sky may speak and stars may fall,
But one remembers before them all.
Not in dust, nor through the air —
But where the silence becomes the stare."

Jack stepped forward and reached into the pouch.

Out rose a marble — obsidian black, streaked with silver and faint hints of purple and midnight blue. Tiny stars seemed to move inside it as if the whole galaxy had been sealed within.

OUTER SPACE

The marble didn’t hum. It didn’t glow.

It *watched.*

Bernard’s voice was soft. “Outer Space was the first marble to know wonder. She’s not just about stars — she holds *infinity*. She’s not afraid of darkness. She *is* the darkness… filled with light.”

Jack knelt, placed the marble at the centre of the constellation ring — and looked up.

The stars above rearranged.

For one breathless moment, the marble and the sky matched perfectly — and then, *Pop!* — the marble disappeared into the pouch.

Above them, a meteor streaked across the heavens.

Ollie clapped once. “That. Was. Awesome.”

Jack smiled. “We’re stargazers now.”

Bernard’s tail twitched. “Let’s switch skies. We’re heading to the Philippines next — where islands drift and marbles speak through tides.”

Chapter 37: *Jack and the Marble of the Singing Sea*

STARFISH

The sun was rising over the **Bacuit Archipelago** as the team arrived by outrigger boat, weaving between towering limestone cliffs and turquoise waters.

“Looks like a postcard,” Lenny said, dipping his fingers in the sea.

“Looks like a trap,” Ollie muttered, eyeing the jagged rocks.

Bernard stood proudly at the front of the boat, his ears twitching. “This place holds an ancient song. And the marble here? It’s been waiting centuries to hear its chorus again.”

Their guide, a quiet island elder named **Lola Mira**, took them to a hidden lagoon. At its centre was a stone outcrop shaped like a giant conch shell. Jack climbed onto it carefully.

Etched across the rock in Tagalog and glowing faintly was a message:

"Where ocean breathes and sky forgets,
The marble sings beneath the wet.
But sing not high, and shout not low —
Just hum the heart the waters know."

They all fell silent. The sea was still. The cliffs echoed like the inside of a drum.

Jack knelt and closed his eyes. He began to hum — not a song, just a memory. A tune from home. A lullaby he didn’t even realise he remembered.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated up — soft blue, pale gold, and white, with swirling fins and ripples along its sides like seafoam frozen mid-dance.

STARFISH

It shimmered in the light like the surface of a reef, delicate and alive.

Bernard spoke softly. “Starfish is a marble of connection — not between people, but between *worlds*. She brings calm across currents, unity across distance.”

The marble spun once, then dropped into the sea — and reappeared instantly inside Jack’s pouch.

Pop!

The water around the outcrop sparkled. Fish leapt. Wind shifted. And Jack swore the marble had just sung a note only the ocean could understand.

Imogen wiped her eyes. “That was… beautiful.”

Bernard grinned. “And next? We swap saltwater for stone. It’s time to head to Germany — where forests whisper in rhymes and a marble waits in the Black Forest.”

Chapter 38: *Jack and the Riddle of the Black Forest*

BUNTING

The **Black Forest** was darker than expected.

Tall pines blocked the sun, and fog crept low between the trunks like something alive. The team followed a winding path near the town of **Triberg**, home to cuckoo clocks, legends, and… something older.

"This is like walking into a storybook," Imogen whispered, glancing at her notes. "The Brothers Grimm used to wander this forest."

"I think I read about this exact path," Lenny said. "Spoiler: It ends with someone getting eaten."

Bernard's tail flicked. "No wolves today. But there *is* a marble here — one hidden behind a riddle that only children ever solved."

They reached a moss-covered clearing where a tree stump sat in the centre, carved with looping script in both German and English.

Jack stepped forward. The pouch stirred.

Then the words began to glow:

"Beneath the root where stories sleep,
A marble hums in shadows deep.
To wake it not with fire or fright,
But speak the truth from childlike light."

Ollie frowned. "Childlike light?"

Jack thought back to being younger — before the journey, before the pouch. He thought of bedtime stories, blanket forts, pretending to be a knight with a marble as a sword.

The pouch glowed.

A marble rose — dark green and deep plum, patterned with vines and tiny silver dots like fairylights in a midnight forest.

BUNTING

It shimmered softly, its surface playful and mysterious.

Bernard tilted his head. "Bunting is a trickster marble. It hides in games, stories, riddles… and only reveals itself to those who believe in things they can't see."

Jack smiled. "I believe."

The tree stump cracked. A root shifted aside, revealing a hollow.

The marble danced once mid-air, then *Pop!* — into the pouch it went.

The trees whispered something in a language none of them knew.

Imogen looked around, suddenly alert. "This place… it's not just old. It's *alive.*"

Bernard nodded. "We'd better move on."

Lenny checked the map. "Next stop?"

Bernard's eyes twinkled. "Indonesia. Temples, jungles… and a marble that hides among the gods."

Chapter 39: *Jack and the Temple of the Thousand Faces*

HAUNTED GHOST

The team arrived at **Borobudur**, the great Buddhist temple in **Central Java**, just before dawn. Rising from the jungle like a dream in stone, it looked like a giant stupa made from stacked stars.

“This place feels sacred,” Jack whispered.

“It is,” Bernard replied. “And so is the marble that sleeps here.”

The temple’s 500 Buddha statues watched silently as they climbed the winding stone path to the top. All around them, the jungle was waking up — monkeys chattered in the trees, and gongs rang faintly from nearby monasteries.

As they reached the summit, a breeze stirred. One of the Buddha statues shimmered — not changing, just… *noticing.*

At its base, in the stone, appeared glowing script:

"The one who sees with many eyes,
Who hides where all the silence lies,
May grant the seeker’s steady heart
The marble shaped by ancient art."

Bernard spoke low. “There’s a riddle here — not of words, but of *presence.* This marble is watching us too.”

Jack reached into the pouch.

A marble floated upward — deep amber and smoky brown, with swirling rings like temple incense trapped in glass. Its surface was smooth, but inside… something moved.

HAUNTED GHOST

Despite the name, this marble is quiet and solemn — misty grey with hints of gold and jade, shimmering like a memory that never quite faded. It’s associated with spiritual protection, ancestral presence, and deep reverence.

Bernard lowered his head. “Haunted Ghost is not evil. She is remembrance. She guards what the world forgets — temples, stories, people.”

Jack placed the marble in a carved lotus at the centre of the summit.

For a moment, time paused.

Then *Pop!* — the marble returned to the pouch.

And one by one… the faces of the statues seemed to turn just slightly — all looking toward Jack.

Imogen’s voice cracked. “Did… that just happen?”

“Yes,” Bernard said. “And now it’s time to go. The next marble lies beneath the icefields of Argentina.”

Chapter 40: *Jack and the Glacier That Remembers*

COOLWHIP

The team stood before the majestic **Perito Moreno Glacier** in **Patagonia**, awestruck by the sheer wall of ice that stretched across the valley like a frozen tidal wave. The blue glow from within pulsed faintly, as if something deep inside were breathing.

“This is one of the only glaciers in the world that’s still growing,” Imogen said. “It’s alive.”

Jack nodded. “And something inside it is calling.”

Bernard’s fur bristled. “The marble here has been locked in silence for centuries. It was dropped during an expedition that never returned.”

They joined a small local guide and hiked to a lesser-known ice cave at the glacier’s base. The deeper they entered, the colder and quieter it became — until sound itself seemed frozen.

Inside the cave, Jack saw it: a pillar of translucent ice, and at its core — something glimmering.

As he approached, glowing letters spiraled up the walls of the cavern:

"The frozen speaks in breathless hush,
Where time is still, and marbles blush.
To find the heart within the frost,
Confess the fire that you have lost."

Ollie stepped back. “Confess what?”

But Jack already knew.

He stepped forward, placed a hand against the ice, and whispered:
“I miss my family. I’m afraid of forgetting home.”

The pouch pulsed. A marble rose — brilliant blue with streaks of white and shimmers like frost dancing in moonlight.

COOLWHIP
A marble with swirling blues and bright silver flecks, spinning like a cold wind whipped into a spiral. It’s playful, but precise — a messenger of clarity, movement, and purpose beneath pressure.

Bernard smiled. “Coolwhip doesn’t freeze. She *moves.* She brings momentum to those who are stuck — and lightness to those weighed down.”

Jack placed the marble against the pillar.

Crack!
The ice split, and the marble *popped* back into the pouch.

The air warmed slightly. A soft breeze passed through the cave — a *thank you* carried by the glacier itself.

Lenny sighed. “Let’s find somewhere hot next.”

Bernard looked east. “Perfect. We’re heading to the UAE — to the sands of the Empty Quarter.”

Chapter 41: *Jack and the Dune of Hidden Fire*

SPACE KAKE

The city of **Dubai** gleamed like a jewel on the edge of the desert — a fusion of modern marvels and timeless tradition. But Jack and the team weren't here for luxury towers or gold markets.

They were heading into the **Rub' al Khali** — the **Empty Quarter**, the largest continuous stretch of sand in the world.

Bernard squinted at the horizon. "There's a dune out there that hasn't moved in a thousand years. Buried beneath it… is a marble once owned by a Bedouin seer."

"Did she bury it on purpose?" Imogen asked.

"She said it would find its seeker when the desert was quiet enough to listen."

The team joined a camel caravan led by a weathered man named **Hamid**, who spoke little but smiled often. After a long, silent journey through golden waves of sand, they arrived at a flat-topped dune shaped like a crescent moon.

At its base, half-buried in drifted sand, lay a circular stone slab. As Jack brushed it off, faint script shimmered into view:

"Where fire sleeps and silence sways,
A marble waits in buried blaze.
No wind, no step, no voice may wake —
But truth beneath the still must quake."

Jack knelt, took a deep breath, and let the silence soak in.

He thought of how far they'd come. Of the fear that they might not reach the end. And then he whispered:

"I doubt myself. Every day."

The pouch responded.

A marble floated upward — burnt gold, scorched orange, with streaks of black like ash frozen in motion. Heat rippled gently around it, though it gave no flame.

SPACE KAKE
A swirling fusion of sandy beige and cosmic gold, with streaks of heat and gravity — a marble said to have fallen in the desert during a meteor shower. It's chaotic yet cosmic, tied to balance in disorder.

Bernard narrowed his eyes. "Space Kake is chaos refined. She brings transformation where stagnation lives. She wakes what was long buried — in earth *and* in people."

Jack gently placed the marble on the stone slab.

The dune rumbled. Sand cascaded down its face like a soft landslide.

Then *Pop!* — the marble vanished into the pouch, and the heat lifted slightly.

Hamid nodded with quiet approval. "The desert remembers you."

Bernard looked out over the rising dunes. "Next stop — Denmark. Cold sea cliffs, coastal winds… and a marble hidden where tides turn twice."

Chapter 42: *Jack and the Whisper of the Windfjord*

BLUE DOLPHIN

The wind was sharp and salty as Jack and the team stood at the edge of the **Møns Klint** — a towering white chalk cliff that dropped dramatically into the Baltic Sea. Gulls wheeled overhead, and below, the waves whispered stories only the rocks remembered.

“This place feels like it belongs in a dream,” Imogen said, sketching the jagged coastline.

Lenny shivered. “It also feels like if I sneeze, I’m falling two hundred feet.”

Bernard sniffed the breeze. “The marble here is an old one. It was gifted to a Viking boy who listened to the wind better than he listened to his elders.”

“And that’s a good thing?” Ollie asked.

“It was for him,” Bernard replied with a wink.

They followed a winding trail down the cliffs to a hidden cove, only accessible during low tide. Seaweed clung to the rocks, and a cave mouth gaped like the entrance to an ancient shipwreck.

Inside the sea cave, Jack stepped forward first. The pouch tugged gently against his hip, leading him to a carved slab set into the cave wall. The stone shimmered with runes that rearranged themselves into English as he read:

> *"When ocean sighs and wind stands still,*
> *A marble waits beyond the chill.*
> *No storm, no sail, no line to throw —*
> *Just listen deep, and let it go."*

Imogen tilted her head. “Let *what* go?”

Jack didn’t answer. He just closed his eyes… and listened.

He thought of the weight he carried. Of the marbles already collected. Of how close they were to the end. He let it all go.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — shimmering ocean blue, with pearlescent streaks and tiny bubbles within it, like a dolphin breaking the water’s surface.

BLUE DOLPHIN

Bernard’s eyes softened. “Blue Dolphin is the marble of freedom. She helps lost ones find their way — not through maps, but through *feeling*. She doesn’t lead. She trusts.”

Jack placed the marble on a small, wet shelf of stone where sea met sky.

A single wave rolled into the cave, touched the marble — and *Pop!* — it vanished into the pouch with a sound like a dolphin’s chirp.

Outside, the wind picked up again.

Lenny looked to the horizon. “That one… felt like coming up for air.”

Jack smiled. “Let’s hope the next one swims as well.”

Bernard turned his nose to the wind. “We’re heading to South America again — to Colombia. Jungle-covered mountains, hidden cities, and a marble that listens from behind a waterfall.”

Chapter 43: *Jack and the Secrets Behind the Waterfall*

CATERHOOTS

The trek to **Cerro Campana** had taken hours. Jack and the team were deep in the **Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta**, surrounded by jungle, towering cliffs, and birds that sang like flutes.

“This feels like the jungle’s holding its breath,” Imogen said, swatting a mosquito.

“It is,” Bernard said. “The marble here has slept for a thousand years, just behind a waterfall where voices are erased.”

They followed an overgrown trail until they reached it — a wide, silvery cascade pouring from the rocks into a sparkling pool below. Ferns dripped with mist, and the roar of the water filled their ears.

But behind the waterfall, partially obscured, was something carved into the cliff — an old symbol of a spiral wrapped in feathers.

Jack stepped beneath the spray, soaking instantly, and ran his fingers over the carving. The sound of the water faded around him. It was as if the world had gone quiet.

And then, glowing in the stone, words appeared:

> *"Where echoes fall and flow unwinds,*
> *A marble waits where stillness binds.*
> *To find its shape, speak not, nor try —*
> *Just let the water wash your why."*

Jack closed his eyes.

He thought of the reason they were here.

Not just for adventure, or mystery… but to restore something that had been lost.

He let go of the question. Let the answer be enough.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — emerald green and sky blue, patterned like a hummingbird’s wings. Water droplets clung to it and shimmered.

CATERHOOTS

The marble spun slowly, catching the light like feathers in flight.

Bernard smiled. “Caterhoots is wild wisdom. She doesn’t teach with words. She teaches with movement, with play, with mystery. She's the jungle’s laughter and her deepest breath.”

Jack cupped the marble in both hands.

Then — *Pop!*
It disappeared into the pouch.

Behind the waterfall, a single bird called out — long and musical, like a forgotten flute playing once more.

Lenny shivered. “Let’s get dry before I grow moss.”

Bernard shook out his fur. “Next up — the rooftops of Portugal. Tiles, towers, and a marble that only appears when shadows match the sun.”

Chapter 44: *Jack and the Shadow on the Rooftops*

TWIXTS

The city of **Lisbon** gleamed under a golden sun. Terracotta rooftops sprawled in every direction, broken only by church spires and bell towers. The air carried the scent of custard tarts, grilled sardines… and something older.

Jack and the team wandered through the **Alfama district**, the oldest part of the city. Cobblestone alleys twisted like forgotten mazes, and ceramic tiles — **azulejos** — adorned nearly every wall, each one whispering a different story.

“This place feels like a song,” Imogen said, sketching a blue-and-white tile that showed a ship sailing into the clouds.

“It *is* a song,” Bernard said, sniffing the air. “And today, it’s singing for us.”

They followed him up to the rooftops — a tangled patchwork of chimneys, balconies, and potted lemon trees. At the very top, beside an abandoned bell tower, stood a stone archway that cast a perfect shadow across the floor.

Jack stepped into it. As he did, the shadow shifted… and glowing words appeared in its centre:

> *"When tile meets time and rooftops glow,*
> *A marble wakes in light and shadow.*
> *Don’t chase the shape, but let it find*
> *The one who leaves the past behind."*

Jack thought of how far they’d come.

He’d stopped looking back months ago — not because he didn’t miss home, but because he’d begun to understand *why* he was on this mission.

The pouch responded.

A marble floated upward — sapphire blue and sunlit gold, with curved streaks like brushstrokes or mosaics, spinning like a weathervane in an ocean breeze.

TWIXTS

It shimmered with duality — night and day, joy and sorrow, home and away — a marble that lived between two worlds.

Bernard nodded solemnly. “Twixts is the marble of balance. She bridges opposites — city and sea, future and past. She’s the reason stories *work.*”

Jack set the marble down gently in the centre of the shadow.

The shadow vanished.

Pop!
The marble entered the pouch — and the bell tower above rang, even though the rope hadn’t moved.

“That… was eerie,” Lenny whispered.

“That,” said Jack, “was right.”

Bernard stretched his paws. “Let’s trade rooftops for ruins. We’re off to Jordan’s neighbor — it’s time for Lebanon.”

Chapter 45: *Jack and the Marble Beneath the Cedars*

EVIL SPROCKET

The team stood in **Baalbek**, Lebanon — among towering Roman ruins, half-sunken stones, and the haunting beauty of a city that had endured everything. The ancient **Temple of Jupiter** loomed above them like a forgotten god.

“This place feels strong,” Jack said. “But not loud about it.”

“It’s not the marble that speaks here,” Bernard replied. “It’s the silence.”

They stepped through the crumbling arches and into a courtyard where time had forgotten to keep moving. Wildflowers pushed through the cracks in the floor, and lizards darted in and out of sunlight.

Near a broken column, a cedar sapling grew alone — too new for a place so old.

Carved into the trunk of the young tree was a single glowing word:
“Remember.”

Beneath it, on a stone plaque cracked in half, a longer message appeared:

> *"When stone forgets and forest learns,*
> *The marble waits where silence turns.*
> *Not in might, nor voice, nor flame —*
> *But through the strength of whispered name."*

Jack reached into the pouch.

A marble floated upward — deep red with gold and smoky grey streaks, like burning embers under dust. It pulsed with quiet resolve.

EVIL SPROCKET

Despite the name, the marble didn’t feel evil. It felt *angry*, yes — but righteous. A marble forged from fire, and shaped by resistance.

Bernard spoke softly. “Evil Sprocket wasn’t a villain. She was a protector — one who refused to stay silent. She reminds broken things that they can still *bite back.*”

Jack knelt beside the sapling and whispered:
“We remember.”

The cedar leaves glowed faintly.

Then *Pop!* — the marble vanished into the pouch.

The wind picked up, rustling the temple’s empty columns like a slow applause.

Imogen wiped her eyes. “This one… meant something.”

Jack nodded. “Let’s not forget it.”

Bernard looked out toward the sea. “Next stop? The land of dragons, dumplings, and one *very* watchful marble — China.”

Chapter 46: *Jack and the Lantern of the Sleeping Dragon*

CHALKY PIRATE

The journey through **Guilin**, in southern China, was like stepping into a painting. Jagged limestone karsts jutted out of the earth like ancient teeth, reflected perfectly in the Li River's still surface.

"This doesn't even look real," Lenny said, wide-eyed.

"It isn't," Bernard replied, hopping onto a mossy stone. "It's *older* than real. It's where legends rest."

Their destination was **Reed Flute Cave**, a glowing cavern of stalactites, mirrored pools, and stories etched in stone. Inside, coloured lights cast reflections that danced on the walls like fire-breathing shadows.

At the heart of the cave, they found it: a stone dragon wrapped around a lantern, carved into the rock above a still pool. As Jack stepped closer, the lantern flickered to life, casting glowing script across the water.

> *"The dragon dreams, the lantern sleeps,*
> *The marble glows where silence weeps.*
> *To stir the flame, speak not with might —*
> *But bow with truth and call the light."*

Imogen whispered, "It's a test of humility."

Jack knelt.

He thought of all the times he'd led with doubt. Of how many marbles they'd found — and how many were left.

"I'm still learning," he said aloud. "And I always will be."

The pouch stirred.

A marble emerged — rich crimson with golden spirals, soft flickers of flame within it, and a glossy sheen like lacquered silk.

CHALKY PIRATE

Bernard chuckled. "Chalky Pirate stirs the still waters. He doesn't wait to be chosen — he *chooses*. But when he does… he guards your truth with all he's got."

The lantern overhead flickered brightly.

Then *Pop!*
The marble disappeared into the pouch, leaving a burst of glowing sparkles across the pool.

Jack stood. "That one was a surprise."

"They all are," Bernard grinned.

Ollie looked up. "Where next?"

Bernard's eyes narrowed toward the horizon. "The land of green hills and old giants — time to find a marble in Ireland's cousin… **Wales**."

Chapter 47: *Jack and the Marble in the Heart of the Hill*

GREEN CRIMSON

They hiked through the **Brecon Beacons**, a place where every mountain looked like it could speak — and probably had. Mist clung to the hills, the grass was soaked with dew, and sheep blinked at them as they passed like sleepy gatekeepers.

“Feels like the land knows we’re here,” Jack said.

“It does,” Bernard replied. “And it’s watching.”

They were headed toward a place marked only on old maps as **Cwm Ddu**, the “Black Valley” — a hidden bowl between peaks where no birds flew and no phones had signal.

In the centre stood a solitary mound of stone, partially buried in moss. An old legend claimed it was the resting place of **Owain Glyndŵr’s final dream** — whatever that meant.

On the flattest stone at its centre, Jack brushed away the moss to reveal an ancient carving of a coiled creature — half dragon, half bird. As he touched it, glowing runes spread across the stone:

> *"Beneath the hill where silence grows,*
> *A marble rests in earth’s old toes.*
> *To call it forth, no sword, no song —*
> *Just one who knows they still belong."*

Jack knelt and placed both hands on the stone. He closed his eyes.

He thought of home.
Of **Orpington**.
Of the first marble.
And of how much this mission had changed him.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — pale green and stormy grey, with flickers of gold and crimson, like fire caught in fog.

GREEN CRIMSON

It hummed like a distant horn — soft but certain.

Bernard bowed. “Green Crimson belongs to the land. She carries history in her veins and pride in her silence. She’s the marble of roots — of *belonging*.”

Jack placed the marble at the top of the mound.

The wind stopped.

Then *Pop!* — the marble slipped into the pouch, and the hills around them whispered something in Welsh — too old to understand, but kind enough to feel.

Lenny exhaled. “That one felt like going home.”

Jack looked out across the misty valley. “That’s because we never really left.”

Bernard wagged his tail. “Now… let’s head for the skies. We’re going to **Nepal’s neighbour — Bhutan** — to find a marble hidden between monks and mountains.”

Chapter 48: *Jack and the Prayer of the Cloud Temple*

EMILY BROWN

The team had travelled by winding mountain roads into the heart of **Paro**, where **Taktsang Monastery** — the **Tiger's Nest** — clung to the side of a cliff like a secret kept by the Earth itself.

"It looks like it was placed there by the wind," Imogen whispered.

"No," Bernard said softly. "It was placed there by *intention.* And so was the marble we seek."

They climbed for hours, zigzagging through pine forests where prayer wheels turned slowly, powered by the breeze. Above them, colourful flags fluttered — each carrying a silent hope into the sky.

When they finally reached the monastery gates, a red-robed monk waited for them, smiling.

"You've come far," he said to Jack. "But this one… is already listening."

He led them to a small shrine room, empty except for a single prayer wheel in the centre. It spun slowly — but made no sound. Jack stepped closer, and the wheel suddenly stopped.

A voice, not spoken but felt, filled the room:

> *"Where wind forgets and stillness breathes,*
> *A marble floats on mountain sheaths.*
> *Speak not your name, nor ask the skies —*
> *Just close your mind, and open eyes."*

Jack knelt beside the wheel and let himself go completely quiet.

The pouch glowed.

A marble rose — soft ivory and sky blue, with drifting silver swirls like clouds trapped in glass. It spun slowly, radiating a peace deeper than sleep.

EMILY BROWN

The marble gave off the sense of calm confidence, like someone who led not with voice but with presence.

Bernard bowed his head. "Emily Brown is serenity. She brings clarity to the clouded and silence to the overwhelmed. She reminds us that we are *enough* — even when we don't feel it."

Jack reached out. The marble touched the wheel.

It spun once.

Pop! — Emily Brown vanished into the pouch.

The monk placed a hand on Jack's shoulder. "Your journey honours hers."

Lenny stood at the window. "What's next?"

Bernard stared out across the mountains. "A place shaped by the sea and rumbling earth. Our next marble waits in **New Zealand**."

Chapter 49: *Jack and the Marble of the First Dawn*

CLOWNBALLS

The team arrived on the **North Island**, near **Cape Reinga**, the very tip of Aotearoa — where the Māori believe souls leap into the sea to return to their ancestors. The cliffs were silent, sacred, and soaked in golden light.

“It’s beautiful,” Imogen whispered. “But also… heavy.”

“That’s because it’s more than land,” Bernard said. “It’s memory.”

Their guide, a Māori elder named **Koro Tama**, led them to a narrow path lined with carved **pōhutukawa trees**, their red blossoms blooming defiantly against the sea wind.

“You seek something,” he said to Jack. “But it seeks you too.”

At the end of the trail stood a smooth black rock covered in swirling engravings. As Jack placed his hand on it, the wind stopped, and words shimmered across the surface:

> *"Where ocean meets the sky in flame,*
> *A marble wakes with none to tame.*
> *Not through force nor clever plan,*
> *But with the strength of who I am."*

Jack thought about how far they’d come. Fifty marbles. Fifty countries. Fifty truths.

He didn’t force it. He just breathed.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — deep blue and crimson, flecked with gold, its pattern swirling like a meeting of sea and sky.

CLOWNBALLS

It shimmered with playful energy and unexpected depth — both bold and humble, like a warrior wrapped in laughter.

Bernard smiled. “Clownballs is joy with honour. She laughs without mocking and fights without anger. She reminds us that strength and silliness can share the same breath.”

Jack nodded, placed the marble on the carved stone…

Pop!

It vanished into the pouch.

Koro Tama bowed. “Your light walks well with ours.”

As they turned back toward the trail, Jack looked across the sea.

“We’re halfway.”

Bernard nodded. “And the next marble waits on the rooftops of Morocco — where the stars fall between tiles, and truth is hidden in a maze.”

Chapter 50: *Jack and the Maze of the Midnight Tiles*

DINKY KINK

The sun had just set over **Fès**, casting a golden hue over the maze-like medina — one of the oldest in the world. Narrow alleys twisted through markets, hidden doorways, and blue-tiled archways. The sound of distant drumming echoed through the air.

“This is the most confusing place we’ve ever been,” Lenny whispered. “I swear we passed that same orange stall four times.”

Bernard trotted ahead. “That’s the point. This marble doesn’t reveal itself to those who walk straight. It reveals itself to those willing to turn.”

Their local guide, **Amina**, led them to the **Bou Inania Madrasa**, an ancient school wrapped in exquisite mosaic tiles — green, blue, gold, each telling a different piece of Morocco’s history.

At the centre of the courtyard was a fountain shaped like a star. Carved into the tiles surrounding it, a hidden phrase began to glow as Jack stepped forward:

> *"Where colours meet and stories spin,*
> *A marble lies not out, but in.*
> *The one who sees what others miss,*
> *Shall feel the truth within the twist."*

Jack looked at the tiles. His eyes traced the patterns not as shapes — but as paths. Twisting spirals. Repeating stars. The pattern wasn’t flat… it *moved*.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — patterned in desert gold, deep purple, and hints of rose red. Its surface was glossy like ceramic and etched with tiny geometric swirls.

DINKY KINK

It shimmered with playful elegance — a mix of mischief and mystery, like a riddle told with a wink.

Bernard grinned. “Dinky Kink is the marble of misdirection. She hides in patterns and half-truths. She shows you not what you want — but what you missed.”

Jack placed the marble gently into the centre of the fountain.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch, and for a moment, every tile around them shifted — as if the walls were rearranging themselves in thanks.

Imogen looked around. “The city just… realigned itself.”

Jack smiled. “That’s what clarity looks like.”

Bernard stretched. “Next? We follow the trade winds east — to Vietnam. River lanterns, floating markets, and a marble that only glows when night meets water.”

Chapter 51: *Jack and the Lantern of the River Moon*

COSMIC PIXY

The team arrived in **Hội An**, a riverside town glowing with magic. Paper lanterns hung from every doorway, gently swaying in the breeze. As night fell, the town transformed — reflections of light floated across the **Thu Bồn River** like drifting stars.

“This place feels like a dream,” Imogen whispered, notebook in hand.

“It is,” Bernard said, tail flicking. “And tonight, dreams light the way.”

The marble they sought wasn’t in a temple or cave — it was somewhere on the water.

They climbed into a small wooden boat rowed by a quiet old woman named **Bà Hoa**. As she paddled gently upriver, Jack watched other boats float by, each carrying families releasing lanterns into the night.

Bà Hoa pointed to a spot where the river narrowed and the moon shimmered brightest. There, floating alone in the centre, was a **single white lantern** — unlit.

Jack reached toward it. As his fingers brushed the paper, a soft light bloomed within, and glowing words flowed across the surface:

> *"When river stills and moonlight dips,*
> *A marble waits on silent ships.*
> *Speak not aloud, but let it see —*
> *The heart you hold most quietly."*

Jack closed his eyes. He didn’t speak. He just felt.

The love for his brothers. The quiet weight of leading. The wonder of the journey.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — soft lavender and misty blue, speckled with tiny glowing dots, like candlelight caught in fog.

COSMIC PIXY

It sparkled with gentle energy — playful but quiet, like a giggle beneath a prayer.

Bernard nodded. “Cosmic Pixy is the light between lights. She’s laughter in stillness. Wonder in silence. She finds joy even in the weight of the world.”

Jack placed the marble into the lantern.

It flared brightly for just a moment, then *Pop!* — the marble slipped into the pouch.

The lantern floated on.

The moonlight danced across the water, and for a breathless moment, everything — boat, sky, river — was one reflection.

Ollie leaned back. “This marble was… peaceful.”

“And the next?” Jack asked.

Bernard smiled. “Far from peace. We’re going to Mexico. And the marble there? It dances with the dead.”

Chapter 52: *Jack and the Dance of the Sugar Flame*

BOO BOO

The town of **Oaxaca** was alive with colour. Bright paper **papel picado** fluttered above the cobbled streets, marigolds spilled from baskets, and music floated through the air like the scent of pan de muerto. It was **Día de los Muertos** — the Day of the Dead.

“Everyone’s celebrating,” Lenny said, watching children paint their faces like skulls.

“Of course,” said Imogen, scribbling notes. “It’s about remembering the ones we love — not fearing what’s gone.”

Bernard padded past a candlelit **ofrenda**. “The marble we’re looking for isn’t mourned. It’s honoured. And it only appears when someone speaks of the past… with joy.”

They followed a trail of sugar skulls and flower petals to the old town square, where a huge mural of **La Catrina** smiled from the wall. In front of her stood a stone bowl filled with glowing orange petals.

Jack knelt beside it.

From the stone rose faint words, scrawled in smoke above the petals:

> *"Where memory dances and flames don’t burn,*
> *A marble waits when hearts return.*
> *Don’t cry, don’t fear, don’t look below —*
> *But laugh with love and let it show."*

Jack took a breath.

He thought of his grandfather’s stories, of silly moments with Ollie, of the very first marble — the empty pouch and the park in Orpington.

He laughed. Softly. Honestly.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — deep pink with bright orange swirls, glittering like sugar spun into a spiral. It pulsed like a mariachi rhythm caught in glass.

BOO BOO

It shimmered with mischief, memory, and sweet defiance — like a giggling ghost who’d just knocked over a candle.

Bernard wagged his tail. “Boo Boo is the marble of joyful remembrance. She doesn’t mourn. She *dances*. She teaches us that remembering doesn’t have to hurt.”

Jack placed the marble into the bowl of petals.

The candles flared.

Pop!
The marble entered the pouch, and the mural of La Catrina gave a slow, silent wink.

Ollie grinned. “Okay, that was awesome.”

Jack smiled. “And next?”

Bernard looked toward the west. “A different kind of mystery. Time to head to Sweden — to forests, lakes, and a marble that only shows itself at twilight.”

Chapter 53: *Jack and the Song of the Sleeping Light*

DEEP ORCHID

They had arrived in **Dalarna**, Sweden — a region of deep forests and frozen lakes, where red cottages dotted the hills and the sun hung low on the horizon like it was unsure whether to rise or set.

“It’s almost night,” Imogen whispered.

Jack checked his watch. “It’s only three in the afternoon.”

“The marble doesn’t care for time,” Bernard said, padding ahead into the snowy woods. “It waits in the *in-between* — where light and dark share a single breath.”

The team followed an old wooden trail marker to a frozen lake surrounded by fir trees. There, standing half-buried in snow, was a **Dala horse** — the traditional Swedish symbol — carved from stone and covered in tiny frost-runes.

Jack brushed away the snow.

Words shimmered into view, forming across the saddle of the carved horse:

> *"Where twilight walks and silence stays,*
> *A marble hums in frozen haze.*
> *Don’t light the sky or break the sound —*
> *Just feel the dark, and you’ll be found."*

Lenny looked around. “So… no lanterns, no footsteps, no talking?”

Ollie whispered, “Then we’re doomed.”

But Jack smiled. He sat down in the snow, let the cold soak into him, and simply… waited.

The world hushed.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — pale blue and cream white, with subtle glints of silver and gold. Inside it, the colours swirled so slowly, it looked as though the marble itself was asleep.

DEEP ORCHID

It shimmered like a winter flower beneath the frost, fragile and quiet — but unmistakably alive.

Bernard’s voice softened. “Deep Orchid is the marble of still moments. She lives in pauses, between breaths, between thoughts. She reminds us that peace isn’t the absence of noise — it’s the presence of *meaning.*”

Jack cupped the marble in his hands.

Pop!
It slipped into the pouch.

Above them, the northern sky shifted — not to night, not to day, but something beautifully in between.

Imogen closed her sketchbook. “That one felt like a dream.”

Bernard looked south. “Then it’s time to wake up. We’re heading to Greece — where gods once walked, and a marble waits beneath the ruins of Olympus.”

Chapter 54: *Jack and the Marble of Thunder's End*

GOLDFISH

The team arrived at **Delphi**, once the navel of the world according to ancient Greek belief. The ruins stretched up the slope like broken teeth — temples, columns, and statues standing watch beneath the blazing sun.

"Hard to believe this was once the most important place on Earth," Lenny said.

"It still is," Bernard replied. "For the marble that waits here… is not just ancient. It was *witness* to Olympus."

They climbed toward the **Temple of Apollo**, where oracles once gave cryptic prophecies. But it was a smaller, hidden chamber behind the ruins — half-buried in ivy — that called to Jack.

Inside, the air felt charged.

On the wall, beneath a faded carving of a lightning bolt and olive branch, glowing script began to appear:

> *"Where power ends and wisdom grows,*
> *A marble sleeps where silence flows.*
> *Do not demand, do not pretend —*
> *Just speak of fear, and meet the end."*

Jack stood quietly. He felt the weight of all they had learned, the marbles they'd found, and the ones still to come.

"I'm scared," he said softly. "That we'll fail… and it'll all be for nothing."

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — stormcloud grey with veins of electric gold and soft purple streaks, like thunder frozen mid-roar.

GOLDFISH

Despite the name, this marble shimmered with quiet strength — not noisy like thunder, but heavy like the moment *before* it.

Bernard lowered his voice. "Goldfish was named in humour, but carries the weight of storms. She reminds us that the biggest power doesn't roar… it *waits*. It listens. And when needed, it *strikes.*"

Jack stepped forward and placed the marble in the centre of the ancient floor mosaic.

Pop!
The marble slipped into the pouch.

Outside, a breeze stirred the olive trees, and somewhere far off, thunder rolled softly across the sky — though the sky above was clear.

Ollie raised an eyebrow. "Did the gods just say hi?"

"Maybe," Jack smiled. "Maybe they just nodded."

Bernard turned toward the sea. "Next? We sail west — to the land of pyramids, pharaohs, and a marble waiting in the tomb of forgotten names… **Egypt**."

Chapter 55: *Jack and the Tomb of the Nameless Pharaoh*

BOOBERT

They had arrived in **Saqqara**, Egypt — far from the tourist crowds of Giza. Here, the **Step Pyramid** stood older than them all, layered like the bones of the Earth. The sun blazed overhead, and the sand shimmered like gold dust.

“This place feels… buried in memory,” Imogen said, adjusting her sunhat.

Bernard sniffed the air. “Because it *is*. The marble we seek wasn’t owned by a king… it *refused* to be.”

They entered a sealed tomb recently uncovered by archaeologists — a hidden chamber beneath the sands, decorated not in gold, but in strange carvings: broken crowns, scratched-out names, figures walking alone.

At the centre stood a stone altar with no inscriptions — only a small indentation, round like a marble. As Jack stepped close, words began to shimmer along the walls:

> *"Where names are lost and titles fall,*
> *A marble waits behind no wall.*
> *Speak not of fame, or wealth, or throne —*
> *Just say the truth you claim alone."*

Jack placed a hand on the altar and whispered:
“I’m not a hero. I’m just… doing my best.”

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — burnt bronze and matte black, with streaks of white like desert wind etched across obsidian. Its surface was rough, imperfect — but *real*.

BOOBERT

It didn’t shine like a jewel — it *stood* like stone.

Bernard bowed slightly. “Boobert is the marble of humility. He carries no title, no flair, no need for applause. He’s proof that strength can live quietly — in those who show up without being asked.”

Jack placed the marble into the altar.

Pop!
It disappeared into the pouch — and the tomb walls echoed with a sound like distant wind… or distant applause.

Imogen traced her fingers over the carvings. “He didn’t want to be remembered. But now he is.”

Bernard turned to the exit. “Let’s bring that honour to the next place. Our next stop is Turkey — where continents meet, and a marble waits on the edge of old empires.”

Chapter 56: Jack and the Bridge of a Thousand Footsteps

ROCK BALLS

The team arrived in **Istanbul**, where East meets West, and every stone seemed to whisper stories. The city buzzed with the call to prayer, the rustle of bazaars, and the clatter of trams rolling past minarets and towers.

“This place feels like everyone has walked through it,” Lenny said, eyes wide.

“That’s because they have,” Bernard replied. “And one marble here has seen it all.”

They crossed the **Galata Bridge**, where fishermen lined the railing and ferries cut across the water. Beneath them flowed the Bosphorus — the divide between continents and time itself.

They followed Bernard into the heart of the **Hagia Sophia**, now part museum, part mosque, part memory. In a quiet side chamber, there was a hidden alcove behind an ancient mosaic of a lion and a crescent moon. On the wall was a plaque covered in faded Turkish script that rearranged itself into English:

> *"Where foot meets stone and tales are tread,*
> *A marble waits where words were said.*
> *Don’t seek the throne, nor wear the crown —*
> *Just name what holds you when you’re down."*

Jack thought of the pressure of leading the group. The uncertainty. The moments he didn’t talk about.

“I carry fear. But I keep walking anyway.”

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — split in two distinct colours: coppery red and sandy gold, patterned with waves and ridges like an ancient coin worn smooth by time.

ROCK BALLS

It had the solid feel of a foundation — not flashy, not loud, but dependable.

Bernard smiled. “Rock Balls is a keeper of crossroads. He doesn’t ask questions. He just *stands firm.* He holds people together — and places too.”

Jack placed the marble at the base of the alcove.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch, and from deep within the Hagia Sophia came the soft echo of footsteps — many, layered, all walking forward.

Imogen adjusted her bag. “Fifty-seven down.”

Bernard looked eastward. “Then let’s keep crossing. Next stop: **Malaysia** — where rainforests bloom and a marble waits high above the trees.”

Chapter 57: *Jack and the Canopy of Forgotten Colours*

BASKET ZOONS

The team arrived in **Borneo**, Malaysia's wildest realm — a land of tangled trees, ancient vines, and rain that came straight down like liquid curtain threads.

They were deep within the **Danum Valley**, a pristine rainforest filled with unseen wonders. Above them, a vast network of **canopy walkways** stretched between the trees, hundreds of feet above the forest floor.

Bernard led them onto a narrow suspension bridge swaying gently with every step. "The marble is up here — not on the ground. It's where the trees listen to the wind and the sky."

As they crossed a platform near the tallest tree in the valley, a single **orchid vine** bloomed across the railings. At its centre was a carved wooden bowl, aged by rain and time.

Glowing script unfurled around the vine like curling petals:

> *"Where green runs wild and branches weave,*
> *A marble waits for those who leave*
> *Not footprints loud, but hearts that feel —*
> *The quiet truth the leaves conceal."*

Jack closed his eyes and breathed in.

No roads. No noise. Just wind, wings, and a thousand heartbeats hiding in trees.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — mossy green and earthy brown with flashes of bright magenta, like jungle flowers peeking through the foliage.

BASKET ZOONS

It shimmered gently, pulsing like a heartbeat in sync with the forest.

Bernard nodded. "Basket Zoons is the marble of wild balance. She keeps harmony among chaos. She thrives in places untouched — and teaches that beauty doesn't ask to be seen."

Jack placed the marble in the orchid bowl.

A butterfly landed on his wrist.

Pop!
The marble vanished into the pouch, and the trees rustled not with wind, but with recognition.

Ollie leaned over the railing. "I think the forest just… thanked us."

Jack smiled. "Then let's keep walking lightly."

Bernard stretched. "Next? A land of castles, cliffs, and stone circles. A marble waits for us in… **Scotland.**"

Chapter 58: *Jack and the Marble of Standing Silence*

STRIPY TOONS

They had arrived on the **Isle of Lewis**, in the Outer Hebrides — a place where the wind never stopped and time seemed to bend like sea grass. The grey sea churned beyond the cliffs, and the **Callanish Stones** stood in the field like sleeping titans, watching the stars.

“It’s colder than last time,” Lenny muttered, wrapping his scarf tighter.

“Because we’re closer now,” Bernard said, eyes on the sky. “This marble has waited since before words.”

The standing stones loomed in a cross-shaped pattern. At the centre stood the tallest stone, jagged and pitted with age. The earth below it was bare of grass, and the air was thick with electricity.

As Jack stepped forward, something old and silent stirred. Etched faintly into the centre stone, glowing in runes that shimmered like mist, were these words:

> *"When giants watch and shadows lean,*
> *A marble waits in breath unseen.*
> *Don’t break the hush, don’t chase the light —*
> *Just feel the dark, and walk it right."*

Jack didn’t speak.

He simply stepped into the circle and closed his eyes.

The wind died.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated up — dark forest green with streaks of icy silver and deep navy blue, like a storm rolling over a moor. It glowed gently, but with weight — like it knew things Jack never would.

STRIPY TOONS

The marble was patterned like a stone cairn or a layered cliff, swirling with memory, gravity, and stillness.

Bernard’s voice was soft. “Stripy Toons is the marble of ancient watchers. She carries the patience of stone and the memory of rain. She listens long before she speaks — and speaks only when it matters.”

Jack knelt, pressed the marble into the earth between the stones…

Pop!
It disappeared into the pouch.

The wind returned — gently. The stones stood tall, unmoving, but somehow… lighter.

Imogen scribbled quickly. “It felt like we asked a question, and they answered without words.”

Bernard stared out over the hills. “And now, we go far… far east. Our next marble is waiting in the bright lights and quiet corners of **South Korea**.”

Chapter 59: *Jack and the Ink of the Hidden Scroll*

JENNIE PENNY

This time, the team travelled east to **Andong**, home to the **Hahoe Folk Village**, where old wooden houses stood undisturbed by modern life. The river curved gently around the village like a brushstroke on parchment. Paper lanterns bobbed from rooftops, and the scent of pine and charcoal drifted in the air.

“I feel like we’ve stepped backwards,” Imogen said, sketching the wooden beams and paper windows.

“That’s because this marble doesn’t belong to the future,” Bernard said. “It belongs to *memory*.”

Their destination was an ancient calligraphy school hidden beneath the trees on the hill above the village. Inside, low tables sat empty, save for one: a single **inkstone**, cracked, with a brush resting across it. No ink. No scrolls. Just a quiet expectation.

Jack stepped forward.

Words appeared — not on the stone, but in the air above it, like ink bleeding through mist:

> *"When brush runs dry and words fall still,*
> *A marble waits with ancient will.*
> *Speak not aloud, but write your name —*
> *And let it burn without the flame."*

Jack dipped the brush into the dry inkstone. Nothing happened… until he touched the table’s paper surface.

His name appeared, glowing softly, then faded.

The pouch stirred.

A marble rose — ivory white with soft black streaks, swirling like brushstrokes across handmade paper. Hints of rose gold shimmered beneath the surface.

JENNIE PENNY

It spun slowly in the air, quiet as falling snow.

Bernard bowed slightly. “Jennie Penny is the marble of reflection. She remembers without bitterness, and she writes what others are afraid to say. She is story, silence, and strength… all in one.”

Jack placed the marble gently into the inkstone.

The paper around it fluttered — then *Pop!*
The marble slipped into the pouch.

Outside, the wind lifted a curtain, revealing cherry blossoms beginning to bloom — even in the cold.

Lenny exhaled. “That one… wrote something in me.”

Bernard turned toward the southern coast. “Next? We trade temples for islands — we’re going to the Maldives.”

Chapter 60: *Jack and the Marble of the Tidal Memory*

SURF TOONS

The seaplane skimmed the surface before touching down beside a remote atoll — a ring of white sand and turquoise water that looked too perfect to be real. Jack stepped off the pontoon into warm, ankle-deep water.

“I feel like I’ve fallen into a postcard,” Ollie said, blinking at the glittering sea.

“And this marble,” Bernard said, gazing toward the horizon, “isn’t hidden in caves or temples. It floats, drifts, and waits for those who look below the surface.”

They boarded a small wooden boat with a glass floor and sailed to a shallow reef known by locals as the **Mirror of the Moon**. The sea there was so still it reflected the sky like a second world.

Their guide, **Mira**, dropped anchor. “The marble appears when the sea forgets the difference between above and below.”

Beneath the boat, the coral shimmered. Schools of fish moved like paintbrushes across a canvas. At the centre of the reef was a strange circular stone — ancient, sun-bleached, and etched with shell-like spirals.

Then, on the glass beneath Jack’s feet, glowing script emerged:

> *"Where ocean sky and sea are twins,*
> *A marble hides where tide begins.*
> *Speak not of loss, nor dream of gain —*
> *Just float the heart, and shed the name."*

Jack closed his eyes. He thought of who he was before all this — the boy in the park in Orpington. And how much of him still remained, even after 60 marbles.

“I’m still me,” he whispered. “But more.”

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward from the sea — seafoam green and glowing white, with hints of coral pink and crystal blue, like the reef itself had exhaled.

SURF TOONS

It spun slowly, its surface glossy like a polished shell, light and free.

Bernard grinned. “Surf Toons is the marble of letting go. She rides waves of memory without getting stuck. She teaches us that we are not what we hold — we’re how we *move*.”

Jack gently dipped the marble into the water.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch, and a ripple of light spread out across the sea, as though the reef had winked in approval.

Imogen whispered, “That marble… knew how to float before it could roll.”

Bernard lifted his nose to the wind. “And now we fly again. We’re heading to Kenya — where savannas stretch forever, and a marble watches from beneath an acacia tree.”

Chapter 61: *Jack and the Marble Beneath the Acacia Moon*

YELLOW BUTTERCUPS

The team arrived in the **Maasai Mara**, just as the sun began to rise. It painted the landscape in hues of orange and bronze, and the horizon shimmered like a mirage. Herds of wildebeest moved in waves, and birds scattered in bursts of colour.

“This place is huge,” Lenny whispered, scanning the open savannah.

Bernard nodded. “The marble here doesn’t hide. It *roams*. You don’t find it by chasing — you find it by *waiting*.”

Their guide, **Ayo**, led them toward a lone **acacia tree**, standing like a sentinel in the centre of the plains. Beneath it lay a circle of stones marked with hand-carved symbols — lions, birds, suns, and stars.

Jack stepped into the circle. The pouch grew warm.

Then, across the sunlit stone, glowing script began to pulse like the beat of a tribal drum:

> *"Where silence sings and grass runs deep,*
> *A marble waits that does not sleep.*
> *Not caught, not caged, not tricked or tamed —*
> *But earned by knowing you're not named."*

Jack closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

He wasn’t "The Hero." He wasn’t “The Leader.”
He was just Jack — a boy listening to the world.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — earthy yellow with streaks of burnt orange and brown, like sunlight flickering through tall grass. Its core shimmered with rhythm — like a heartbeat in motion.

YELLOW BUTTERCUPS

It rolled lazily in the air, graceful but grounded.

Bernard whispered, “Yellow Buttercups is the marble of quiet courage. She walks softly, never needing to roar. She doesn’t command — she *connects*. She’s the stillness that moves everything else.”

Jack knelt in the grass and placed the marble at the centre of the stone ring.

Pop!
It slipped into the pouch, and the breeze shifted — soft, warm, and filled with life.

A lion roared in the distance.

Imogen smiled. “That one felt like it belonged to the land.”

Bernard looked north. “Next stop — Jordan. Sandstone cities, carved cliffs, and a marble that waits in a place where echoes tell the truth.”

Chapter 62: *Jack and the Echoes of the Hidden City*

HALOWEN

The team stood at the entrance of **Petra**, carved into the mountains like a forgotten heartbeat. The narrow **Siq** canyon wound between towering cliffs, leading them slowly toward the famous façade of the **Treasury**.

“It’s like a city was sculpted, not built,” Imogen whispered, sketchbook already open.

“That’s because it was,” Bernard said. “And one marble here was sculpted, too — not with hands, but with *truth*.”

They followed the canyon deeper, where the stone seemed to grow warmer with each step. Tourists wandered the main paths, but Bernard led them down a quiet route, beyond a collapsed column and past an old Nabatean inscription.

They came to a hidden chamber — open to the sky, walls smoothed by centuries of sand and time. At its centre stood a **stone bowl** surrounded by faded carvings of eyes, stars, and birds.

Jack approached. The bowl flickered with light.

Then words formed in the sandstone beneath their feet:

> *"When kings are gone and names are dust,*
> *A marble waits for those who trust.*
> *Not every echo speaks your name —*
> *Some call your truth without the fame."*

Jack closed his eyes and listened.

He didn’t need recognition. He didn’t want to be remembered as a legend. He just wanted to finish what they’d started.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — deep terracotta red and dusty rose, with golden swirls and chalky lines like wind-carved ridges in stone.

HALOWEN

Its surface was imperfect, but undeniably beautiful — weathered by time, not tarnished by it.

Bernard nodded solemnly. “Halowen is the marble of ancient strength. She doesn’t shine — she *endures*. She teaches that being forgotten doesn’t mean being lost.”

Jack placed the marble gently into the bowl.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch.

Around them, the sandstone glowed faintly — and in the distance, they could hear the sound of wind passing through rock… whispering, remembering.

Lenny looked up. “Only thirty-six left.”

Bernard squinted at the horizon. “And the next takes us across oceans — to the mountains and salt flats of **Bolivia**, where the sky lives beneath your feet.”

Chapter 63: *Jack and the Mirror of the Sky*

CHOCOMINS

The team had reached the **Salar de Uyuni**, the world's largest salt flat — a white expanse stretching endlessly in every direction. After a night of rain, the ground had transformed into a perfect mirror. It was like walking on the sky.

"I can't tell where the Earth ends and the sky begins," Ollie whispered, arms out wide.

"That's because they don't," Bernard said. "This is one of the only places in the world where the marble can see *itself*."

They walked slowly through the reflection, their feet rippling clouds with every step. Bernard led them to an isolated mound of cracked stone and salt — an old **isla de cactus**, where nothing else moved.

At its centre, etched into the surface, was a circle of symbols — sun, lightning, water, and a spiral. Then the air shimmered, and glowing script danced across the salt:

> *"Where silence speaks and sky walks low,*
> *A marble waits where mirrors glow.*
> *Do not look up, nor bow your head —*
> *Just stand between what's live and dead."*

Jack took a deep breath and looked straight ahead — not to the sky, not to the ground, but into the reflection of his own face. For the first time… he didn't need to ask who he was.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — glassy white with shifting layers of pale blue and silver, glowing faintly from within like a captured sunrise reflected in water.

CHOCOMINS

Despite the sweet name, this marble held serenity. It was cool, clean, and timeless — like light made solid.

Bernard's voice was hushed. "Chocomins is the marble of clarity. She reveals what's true, not what's wanted. She clears clouds — inside and out."

Jack stepped into the shallow water and gently placed the marble at the edge of the salt mound.

Pop!
It disappeared into the pouch, and the reflection shimmered — for just a moment, the clouds seemed to *smile back.*

Imogen closed her notebook. "I think that one saw us."

Jack looked up. "And I think it understood."

Bernard faced southwest. "Next? We follow the flame. Our next marble burns in the outback — time to head to **Australia**."

Chapter 64: *Jack and the Fire in the Red Earth*

SPYDERGIRL

The team flew deep into the **Northern Territory**, landing near the ochre plains of **Uluru** — the mighty sandstone monolith that glowed like flame beneath the midday sun.

“It’s like the Earth grew a heart,” Imogen whispered.

“That’s because it *is* one,” Bernard said. “And if you listen, it still beats.”

They joined an Anangu guide named **Mika**, who led them across red dirt trails to a place few visitors saw — a hidden crevice where the rock met shadow, known only in whispers as **Tjukurpa’s Hollow**.

There, the air changed.

Etched into the canyon walls were swirling shapes — fire, serpent, wind — all dancing in spirals around a single handprint. Beneath it, carved directly into the rock, were words that shimmered in the dry heat:

> *"When fire walks and dust stands still,*
> *A marble waits with sacred will.*
> *Not dug, nor claimed, nor forced to shine —*
> *But given where the earth aligns."*

Jack stepped forward and knelt beside the handprint.

“I don’t own any of this,” he whispered. “But I honour it.”

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — rust-red and sunburst yellow, patterned with crackled gold lines like lightning on clay. It shimmered like a desert storm caught in stone.

SPYDERGIRL

It vibrated with energy — ancient, raw, and respectful.

Bernard’s voice dropped. “Spydergirl is the marble of flame and form. She teaches us that true power isn't about heat — it's about *control.* About knowing when to burn… and when to hold back.”

Jack placed the marble in the centre of the handprint.

The canyon warmed — not in temperature, but in presence.

Pop!
The marble disappeared into the pouch.

A gentle wind swirled around them, lifting red dust into the air — and for a heartbeat, Jack could see a serpent painted in the wind.

Lenny took off his hat. “That… was something else.”

Bernard looked up at the Southern Cross. “Next stop: **Finland** — the land of ice, silence, and a marble buried in northern twilight.”

Chapter 65: *Jack and the Forgotten Gallery of the Birch Forest*

ART NOVEOUS

They arrived in **Belovezhskaya Pushcha**, one of Europe's oldest and most enchanted forests, where the trees whispered in silver tongues and the mist hung like silk between the branches. Belarus was quiet — not silent, but watchful, like it was waiting for someone to notice.

"It feels like we stepped into a painting," Imogen whispered, sketchbook in hand.

"Maybe we did," Jack said, gazing at the soft birch trunks glowing pale in the afternoon light.

Bernard led them to a crumbling stone structure hidden deep in the woods — a forgotten **manor house** now claimed by vines and moss. Inside, faded wallpaper peeled like old petals, and dust coated everything… except one hallway.

Here, the walls had been painted with **murals** — vivid, strange, elegant. Swirling lines, golden curves, peacocks, clouds, and clockwork patterns that moved without moving. It felt alive.

On the floor, beneath a shattered chandelier, a polished marble tile reflected the patterns like a mirror. As Jack stepped onto it, the walls shimmered and formed glowing script:

> *"Where lines once bloomed and colour played,*
> *A marble waits where art decayed.*
> *No frame, no fame, no stroke refined —*
> *Just beauty left, and love unsigned."*

Jack knelt slowly. He didn't touch anything. He just looked.

He saw the fading swirls… and loved them.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — pearlescent cream with glimmering silver and bronze curls, as if vines of light had been frozen mid-twirl. It was both regal and wild, refined and impossible.

ART NOVEOUS

Bernard bowed. "Art Noveous is the marble of elegance lost. She teaches us that true beauty doesn't scream — it *lingers*. She's the breath left behind when the gallery is empty."

Jack gently placed the marble on the mosaic floor.

Pop!
The marble disappeared into the pouch — and a breeze stirred the painted walls, which shimmered once before fading back into dust.

Lenny exhaled. "That marble didn't need an audience."

Imogen nodded. "She already knew who she was."

Bernard turned toward the eastern border. "Next? We chase fireflies through the night gardens of **Taiwan** — where a marble hums in neon and rain."

Chapter 66: *Jack and the Marble of Lantern Alley*

BLUE MOONS

The team arrived in **Jiufen**, a hillside village above the sea, where narrow streets wound between old tea houses and red lanterns hung like stars on strings. Mist crept down from the mountains, wrapping the town in mystery.

“It smells like noodles and wet stone,” Lenny said, holding a steamed bun in one hand and an umbrella in the other.

“And memory,” Bernard added. “There’s a marble here that flickers between the past and the possible. You don’t chase her — you catch her reflection.”

The alley narrowed between two buildings, and they entered a secret courtyard behind a paper shop. It was quiet. Rain tapped gently on tiled roofs, and a koi pond glowed with reflections of red light.

In the centre of the pond was a **single floating lantern**, unlit. Jack leaned forward.

As his reflection met the flame-less light, glowing script formed in the water:

> *"Where echoes glow and raindrops fall,*
> *A marble waits behind the wall.*
> *No fire to light, no wish to cast —*
> *Just see the now, not hold the past."*

Jack stood silently.

He let go of the stories. The pressure. The weight.
He simply looked at the rain.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — translucent blue with streaks of moonlight white, dotted with soft golden spots like city lights seen through mist.

BLUE MOONS

It hovered just above the pond, catching the glow of lanterns and stars alike.

Bernard nodded slowly. “Blue Moons is the marble of pause. She is twilight. Reflection. She reminds us that peace isn’t found in action… it’s in *acceptance*.”

Jack reached out.

Pop!
The marble slipped into the pouch — and at that exact moment, the lantern on the pond lit itself, glowing like the moon’s own memory.

Ollie exhaled. “That one felt like a sigh… in a good way.”

Bernard turned toward the docks. “Next? We head west again — to **Austria**, where the marble of echoing halls and golden music waits in the arms of a forgotten waltz.”

Chapter 67: *Jack and the Waltz of the Silent Ballroom*

GOLDY THREES

The team arrived in **Vienna**, where every corner hummed with history. The grand palaces and quiet courtyards whispered with echoes of Mozart, Strauss, and shadows that moved like dancers across centuries.

“This city feels like it never stopped spinning,” Imogen said, twirling once beneath a snow-dusted statue.

“That’s because the music never ended,” Bernard said. “It just softened — and one marble here still holds the final note.”

They entered a shuttered concert hall tucked behind the **Ringstrasse**. Inside, gold-leaf balconies curved like frozen waves, and a **chandelier** taller than a tree glinted dimly in the gloom. The ballroom had been untouched for years — except for the footprints of time.

At the centre stood a **dusty grand piano**, its keys yellowed, but whole. A sheet of faded music rested on the stand: *Waltz of the Lost Marble — Finale.*

As Jack pressed the final key, a single note rang out.
From the floor, script curled upward in delicate silver:

> *"Where music sleeps and echoes spin,*
> *A marble waits where steps begin.*
> *Not played, not sung, not won by ear —*
> *But heard within the quiet clear."*

Jack closed his eyes.
He didn’t hear anything.
He felt the memory of music.
And smiled.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — shimmering gold and soft ivory, with three spiralling rings that danced around each other like dancers mid-step.

GOLDY THREES

It glowed faintly in rhythm — 1… 2… 3. 1… 2… 3.

Bernard whispered, “Goldy Threes is the marble of harmony. She balances chaos with grace. She moves through stillness and reminds us that sometimes… we follow, and sometimes… we *lead*.”

Jack stepped into the centre of the ballroom and bowed.

Pop!
The marble entered the pouch — and for one breathless moment, the chandelier trembled as if in applause.

Lenny looked around. “Did… we just finish a dance?”

Imogen nodded, misty-eyed. “And we didn’t miss a single step.”

Bernard turned toward the mountains. “Let’s trade waltzes for wonder. The next marble waits in **South Africa**, where cliffs meet sea and the wild sings its own song.”

Chapter 68: *Jack and the River That Knew His Name*

BABLOCK HYTHE

The wind rolled gently over the River Thames as the team arrived at **Bablock Hythe**, a quiet, beautiful bend of water where willows leaned close and the sky stretched wide. Jack stood silently for a moment, watching the current move like a slow whisper.

“I thought we’d never come back here,” he said softly.

“This isn’t an ending,” Bernard said, tail wagging. “This is a **gathering**. The marble here doesn’t wait to be found. It waits to welcome you.”

They walked the familiar grassy bank, where an old ferry once crossed and caravans now rested in peace. Children played in the distance, and the pub’s sign swung in the breeze. Everything felt simple… and yet *important*.

At the edge of the water, beside a mossy tree stump shaped like a crooked crown, the earth shimmered faintly. Words formed in the ripples of the river:

> *"Where stillness flows and names return,*
> *A marble waits where hearts still yearn.*
> *No need to search, no call, no test —*
> *Just stand where you have loved the best."*

Jack stood quietly.

He thought of his brothers. Of the pouch. Of the very first marble.
And how *this*… felt like coming home.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — warm green and silver-blue, with flecks of gold that shimmered like riverlight on wet stone. Its surface rippled gently, always in motion.

BABLOCK HYTHE

It wasn’t flashy. It wasn’t loud. But it *belonged*.

Bernard bowed his head. “Bablock Hythe is the marble of memory made real. She reminds you who you are when the world forgets. She grounds the journey, not with maps — but with meaning.”

Jack gently placed the marble in the crook of the stump.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch — and in that moment, a pair of swans glided silently downriver, their reflections smooth and perfect.

Imogen exhaled. “This one didn’t feel like magic.”

“No,” Jack said with a smile. “It felt like home.”

Bernard looked west. “Let’s carry that feeling to the cliffs of **Portugal**, where a marble watches from an old lighthouse, waiting for the tide to return.”

Chapter 69: *Jack and the Lighthouse at the Edge of the World*

RED DOTTIES

The team stood on the windblown cliffs of **Cabo da Roca** — the westernmost point of Europe, where the land falls away and the ocean stretches into forever. Below, waves thundered against the rocks, and gulls circled like sentinels.

“This place feels like the world ends here,” Lenny said.

“It does,” Bernard replied. “And that’s why the marble here was left behind — not lost, but *placed.* To guide others home.”

At the edge stood a **stone lighthouse**, long retired, its beacon cracked but proud. The door creaked open with a whisper of salt air. Inside, spiral stairs wound upward through dust and faded paint.

At the very top — where the lens once turned — sat an old brass telescope, pointed eternally west. Beside it lay a folded parchment, fluttering in the breeze.

As Jack picked it up, glowing script danced across its surface:

> *"Where oceans stretch and towers stay,*
> *A marble waits to light the way.*
> *Don’t seek the shore, nor chase the past —*
> *Just guide the heart that’s lost, at last."*

Jack didn’t look through the telescope.

He turned it toward the sea… and let others see through *him*.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — brilliant white with flashes of red and gold, swirling like fire through fog. It pulsed gently, like a distant beacon flashing once every few seconds.

RED DOTTIES

Its surface shimmered like glass — but its centre burned like hope.

Bernard smiled. “Red Dotties is the marble of guidance. She doesn’t lead by pulling — she leads by *shining.* She’s the reason lost ones find their way back.”

Jack placed the marble in the centre of the old lens.

Pop!
It disappeared into the pouch — and far below, the waves calmed, as if exhaling in relief.

Imogen stared out toward the horizon. “It’s like she never stopped watching.”

“She didn’t,” Jack said. “She waited.”

Bernard turned inland. “Next stop: the **Philippines** — a land of islands, lanterns, and a marble that only glows when joy is shared.”

Chapter 70: *Jack and the Lantern of Laughter*

BUMBLE TOONS

Cebu pulsed with life. Jeepneys rolled past painted in rainbows, and vendors sold grilled corn, dried mangoes, and sticky rice wrapped in banana leaves. The scent of the sea mingled with the sound of laughter as the team arrived just in time for the **Sinulog Festival** — a celebration of colour, devotion, and dance.

"This place doesn't just celebrate," Imogen said, smiling as confetti rained from a rooftop. "It *explodes*."

"It's the perfect place for a marble born of joy," Bernard said. "But be warned — she only reveals herself to those who give joy, not chase it."

They were led through the festivities by a local girl named **Luz**, who brought them to a quieter street tucked behind a church. Strings of hand-folded **parol lanterns** stretched between the trees, each glowing softly. In the middle of the walkway stood an empty pedestal… but the air was *alive*.

Luz pointed to it. "They say if someone makes this street *laugh*, the lantern lights up."

Jack stepped onto the pedestal.
And tripped.

Flat on his face.

The lanterns above flickered… then burst into radiant gold light.

Glowing script formed along the pedestal's edge:

> *"Where joy is sparked and hearts unwind,*
> *A marble waits for those who're kind.*
> *Not clever lines, nor tricks to show —*
> *Just honest joy that's let to flow."*

Jack laughed — a real laugh.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — sunshine yellow with swirls of soft pink and sky blue, like a fiesta rolled into a pearl. It pulsed lightly, like it giggled.

BUMBLE TOONS

It spun in the air like a balloon let loose in the wind.

Bernard beamed. "Bumble Toons is the marble of shared joy. She doesn't light the party — she *is* the party. She reminds us that some of the greatest powers begin with a smile."

Jack gently caught the marble and offered it to Luz.

But she shook her head. "It's yours. But thank you… for sharing."

Pop!
The marble vanished into the pouch, and every lantern in the alley sparkled as if applauding.

Ollie grinned. "I think that marble's still laughing."

Jack nodded. "Let her. She's earned it."

Bernard gazed eastward. "Next? We head to **Norway** — where fjords and legends await, and a marble lies buried in the howl of the wind."

Chapter 71: *Jack and the Wind That Sang in the Pines*

HOOTIE HELMET

The team had arrived in **Geirangerfjord**, a stunning slice of western Norway where mountains plunged into deep, glacial water and waterfalls tumbled like white ribbons from cliffs high above. A hush hung in the air — not silence, but something deeper. Something *watching.*

“I’ve never felt this small,” Ollie whispered, staring at the fjord’s sheer size.

“That’s the point,” Bernard said softly. “The marble here was never meant to be found by strength… only by stillness.”

They took a narrow trail into the pine-covered hills, where the wind whistled between the trees in broken tones — almost like a song forgotten mid-tune.

They reached a stone **listening cairn** — a ring of rocks with a single twisted pine growing in the middle. At its base, Jack found a carved wooden flute with no holes.

Confused, he picked it up.

Suddenly, script formed in frost across the stones:

> *"Where wind forgets the song it knew,*
> *A marble waits in silver hue.*
> *Don’t blow, don’t play, don’t fake a sound —*
> *Just listen deep — it’s all around."*

Jack didn’t play the flute.
He didn’t speak.

He simply sat. Closed his eyes.
And *listened.*

The creak of trees.
The rush of distant water.
The wind whistling through the pines…

And then — a *note*. One soft, pure sound that no one played — yet somehow was heard by all.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — icy silver with wisps of deep pine green, like mist curling between winter branches.

HOOTIE HELMET

Its surface gleamed like polished birch bark, with a faint sparkle, like starlight caught in frost.

Bernard lowered his voice. “Hootie Helmet is the marble of quiet courage. He listens before speaking. He leads without asking. He reminds us that some of the strongest things in the world make the *least* noise.”

Jack placed the marble gently into the middle of the cairn.

Pop!
The marble disappeared into the pouch — and a soft gust of wind circled the pine tree, lifting snow in a gentle spiral before fading away. Imogen whispered, “That one… left a song behind.”

Jack smiled. “And it was just for us.”

Bernard turned toward the rising sun. “Next stop: **Singapore** — where gardens float in the sky, and a marble waits where nature and future bloom together.”

Chapter 72: *Jack and the Garden That Grows in the Sky*

SPIRAL GEMS

From the moment they stepped into **Gardens by the Bay**, the team felt like they had landed in the future. Towering metal trees — the **Supertree Grove** — stretched into the sky like alien flowers, covered in vines, moss, and flickering lights.

“This place feels like it’s dreaming,” Imogen whispered, looking up.

“It’s the dream that came true,” Bernard said. “But one marble here doesn’t just bloom. It *remembers* how it began.”

As night fell, the garden glowed — blues, purples, and greens shining from every tree. The air smelled of orchids and rain. A narrow skywalk wound between the trees, and Bernard led them to the highest platform.

There, in a quiet alcove made of twisted vines and glass, they found a circular patch of moss. At its centre: a smooth stone with a single glowing spiral etched into its surface.

Then words bloomed across the spiral like unfolding petals:

> *"Where growth meets glass and roots touch stars,*
> *A marble sleeps beneath the spars.*
> *Not caged, not clipped, not trimmed or taught —*
> *But found where wild meets what is sought."*

Jack knelt beside the moss.

He didn’t pull the vines back.
He didn’t disturb the design.
He simply *noticed* it.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — vibrant green with soft metallic streaks of copper and violet. Its surface shimmered like a leaf kissed by lightning.

SPIRAL GEMS

It turned slowly, like a seed on the wind, glowing with quiet power.

Bernard smiled. “Spiral Gems is the marble of living growth. She teaches that wild things can *flourish* — even in the most controlled places. She doesn’t resist the future… she *guides* it.”

Jack placed the marble into the centre of the spiral stone.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch — and high above, the Supertrees lit up in a wave of colour that felt like the garden itself was saying thank you.

Lenny leaned over the railing. “That one felt… alive.”

Jack nodded. “And awake.”

Bernard looked across the sea. “Next? We leap across continents — to the bright chaos and hidden alleys of **Bangladesh**, where a marble waits behind the noise.”

Chapter 73: *Jack and the Marble Beneath the Noise*

NAPKIN

The team stepped off the boat at the edge of **Dhaka**, the capital city that never sat still. The streets were a wild orchestra of rickshaw bells, street vendors calling out, children laughing, and roosters that apparently hadn't checked the time.

"This is… loud," Ollie shouted over the din.

"That's because you're listening *outside*," Bernard replied, padding between honking cars. "The marble here lives in the space *within* the noise — like silence wearing a disguise."

They were led through twisting alleyways and smoky market stalls until they reached a crumbling old **mughal-style courtyard**, half-buried behind walls of jasmine and laundry lines.

In the centre stood a **still water basin**, covered in petals. Floating in the centre was a single **paper fan**.

Jack stepped close. The water shimmered.
Words rose from the ripples:

> *"Where footsteps clash and moments blur,*
> *A marble waits where thoughts don't stir.*
> *Don't hush the world, nor run away —*
> *Just find the pause in disarray."*

Jack didn't plug his ears.
He didn't close his eyes.

He breathed in the noise — the joy, the movement, the colour, the life.
And then… something *within* it all stilled.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — bright yellow with soft red splotches, swirling like a mango lassi stirred with sunbeams. Its surface glimmered, not from polish… but from peace.

NAPKIN

Strangely named, gently powerful — this marble felt like laughter mid-stress, or the pause between breaths.

Bernard smiled. "Napkin is the marble of quiet clarity. She doesn't stop the storm — she gives you a napkin to breathe behind. A moment of calm *in* the chaos."

Jack leaned down and placed the marble into the fan at the centre of the basin.

Pop!
It disappeared into the pouch — and a breeze stirred every petal on the surface, as if the whole city had exhaled for just one moment.

Imogen blinked. "That was… the calmest I've felt all day."

Jack nodded. "Maybe the noise wasn't the problem. Maybe I just wasn't listening *right.*"

Bernard lifted his nose. "Let's take that stillness with us — because next we're going to **Argentina**, where music runs through the cobblestones, and a marble dances between memory and motion."

Chapter 74: *Jack and the Tango of the Marble Heart*

POOKIE

They arrived in **Buenos Aires** just as the sun dipped behind the buildings. The warm evening air smelled of coffee and history. Streetlamps flickered to life, and music spilled from plazas where dancers glided beneath the stars.

“Everything here moves like it’s being watched,” Imogen said, notebook open, catching shadows in sketches.

“That’s because the marble here dances,” Bernard said, “but not always *with* someone. Sometimes… it dances *alone.*”

In the neighbourhood of **San Telmo**, where vines crept over iron balconies and murals told stories of revolution and romance, they found an old abandoned **milonga** — a tango hall where footsteps once told every story worth telling.

Inside, light streamed through broken shutters onto a cracked wooden floor. A single pair of dusty shoes stood in the centre of the room.

Then, from beneath them, glowing script rose like steam in the warm air:

> *"Where footsteps echo and lovers part,*
> *A marble waits with beating heart.*
> *Don’t chase the step or lead the spin —*
> *Just move with all you’ve held within."*

Jack stepped into the room.

He didn’t know how to tango.
But he moved anyway.
Not for perfection — for *connection.*

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — crimson red with spirals of black and flecks of gold, spinning slowly like a turn on the dancefloor. It pulsed gently… like a heartbeat.

POOKIE

It shimmered with emotion — bold and gentle, joyful and sad — all at once.

Bernard bowed his head. “Pookie is the marble of honest movement. She doesn’t hide her feelings — she *turns* them. Into rhythm. Into truth. Into something shared.”

Jack cradled the marble and gently placed it on the floor between the shoes.

Pop!
The marble slipped into the pouch — and a single violin string plucked itself in the silence.

Ollie blinked. “Did that violin just… wink at us?”

“Possibly,” Jack grinned.

Bernard looked eastward. “Our next marble waits across the sea in **Greece** — beneath ruins and myths, where a marble has seen heroes rise and fall.”

Chapter 75: *Jack and the Temple That Forgot Its Name*

SIR RODNEY

The team arrived at **Cape Sounion**, where the **Temple of Poseidon** stood high on a cliff, overlooking the glittering Aegean Sea. The columns gleamed white in the afternoon sun, wind rustling through them like whispers from the past.

“You can feel the stories here,” Imogen said, running her hand along a column scarred by time.

Bernard nodded. “The marble we seek wasn’t made by gods — but it was *watched* by them.”

They wandered the ruins until Jack spotted a carved stone basin tucked behind a broken wall, almost buried beneath ivy. Its centre was smooth, but worn — as if someone had returned to it, over and over again.

Then, in the shifting light, glowing script spread across the inner rim:

> *"Where names were carved and stars have dimmed,*
> *A marble waits where fate was trimmed.*
> *No crown, no war, no hero's call —*
> *Just stand, and know you’re small… that’s all."*

Jack stood barefoot at the basin’s edge, feeling the marble tiles beneath his toes.

He didn’t speak.

He didn’t ask.

He simply stood still — and allowed the ruins to tell *their* story.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — glowing white with swirls of pale blue and smoky grey, like sea mist wrapped in ancient marble. Its surface shimmered faintly with golden cracks, as though it had broken once — and been made stronger.

SIR RODNEY

He floated solemnly in the air — dignified, tired, but *unbroken*.

Bernard lowered his head. “Sir Rodney is the marble of quiet honour. He does not boast. He has no need for glory. He stands, always — not for power, but because it’s *right.*”

Jack carefully placed the marble in the centre of the basin.

Pop!
It disappeared into the pouch — and the sea breeze picked up, carrying with it the faint sound of a lyre in the distance.

Lenny shaded his eyes. “That marble felt like a knight turned to stone.”

Jack smiled. “Maybe he *chose* to be.”

Bernard turned toward the next adventure. “And now… from marble temples to California dreams. Our next marble waits beneath neon lights and sunlit secrets.”

Chapter 76: *Jack and the Signal from the Silent Satellite*

ORBIT MOONS

The team arrived in the **Mojave Desert**, where heat shimmered on the horizon and strange machines slept under the sun. They weren't near the beach, or the cities, or even Hollywood. They were in the heart of forgotten radio towers and lost space dreams — at the edge of the **Goldstone Deep Space Network**.

"This is where NASA once listened to the stars," Imogen said, staring at the giant satellite dishes slowly turning, scanning… *something.*

"And now?" asked Ollie.

Bernard squinted at the dusty horizon. "Now, one marble still *listens.*"

They followed a narrow access road to a decommissioned **listening post**, where the paint peeled and the panels buzzed faintly in the heat. On the control console was a single glowing **green button** — unlabelled, untouched.

Jack pressed it.

Nothing happened.
Then a line of glowing script scrolled across a dusty monitor:

> *"Where dreams were caught and stars were near,*
> *A marble waits, though no one hears.*
> *Don't speak your wish. Don't call by name.*
> *Just tune your soul to match the flame."*

Jack closed his eyes.
He didn't wish. He didn't hope.
He simply listened — like the marble had been doing, all this time.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — shimmering black with pulses of silver, gold, and cobalt blue like orbiting planets. A faint glowing ring circled it, rotating slowly like a forgotten satellite.

ORBIT MOONS

Its presence was gentle — not lonely, but longing. The quiet kind of marble that looked outward… and *inward.*

Bernard murmured, "Orbit Moons is the marble of the waiting signal. She reminds us that being unheard doesn't mean we're not *listening.* That sometimes, the message *is* the silence."

Jack cradled the marble and placed it on the console.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch — and outside, one of the old dishes tilted just slightly, pointing once more toward the stars.

Lenny looked up. "Think she heard something?"

Jack nodded. "She *always* does."

Bernard smiled. "Let's keep chasing echoes. Next stop: North **Korea**, where lights flash and legends sleep — and a marble waits in the rhythm of a city that never pauses."

Chapter 77: *Jack and the Marble in the Land That Whispered*

PLANET GRUNGE

Crossing into **North Korea** was different. There were no crowds, no colours, no noise — just order, walls, and a sky that felt strangely flat.

They were escorted to the foothills near **Mount Paektu**, a sacred volcano said to be the birthplace of the Korean people. The air was thin, and the land — though beautiful — felt like it was holding its breath.

"We must walk quietly," Bernard said. "Not out of fear… but respect. The marble here isn't loud. She's *listening.*"

The path curved around a lake so still it looked frozen, though it wasn't. On the far side stood an old stone shrine, carved not with names, but with *gaps* — empty boxes where characters once were.

In the centre of the shrine was a **polished slab of black stone**, cold to the touch. As Jack stepped onto it, glowing text flickered — then disappeared.

Only one phrase remained:

> *"Where truth is quiet and lies are loud,*
> *A marble waits beneath the shroud.*
> *Don't fight the silence — sit, and see.*
> *What's hidden… longs to be."*

Jack sat.
He said nothing.

He didn't try to solve the puzzle.
He didn't even open the pouch.
He simply let *being there* be enough.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — dark grey, nearly black, but layered with veins of pale light and muted red. It looked like volcanic ash… but breathed like a heartbeat.

PLANET GRUNGE

It hummed gently — like static behind a silent radio.

Bernard bowed. "Planet Grunge is the marble of *resistance through presence.* She doesn't shout. She stays. She watches. And when the time is right… she *remembers everything.*"

Jack placed the marble gently at the heart of the shrine.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch — and from the trees nearby, a single bird called out. One note. One truth.

Imogen looked up. "I don't think that was just a bird."

Jack whispered, "I think something here *woke up.*"

Bernard turned toward the distant border. "Next? We head to **New Zealand**, where the land breathes deep — and a marble waits in the belly of a sleeping volcano."

Chapter 78: *Jack and the Breath of the Fire Giant*

ROCK OCTOPUSSY

The team landed on the **North Island**, near **Mount Tongariro** — a volcano nestled within the ancient spiritual lands of the Māori. Steam curled from vents in the rock. Cracks hissed with breath. The mountain wasn't erupting… but it was *alive.*

"Feels like the Earth is whispering," Lenny said, looking around nervously.

"It is," Bernard said. "The marble here listens to what burns *below* the silence. It waits for those who aren't afraid to step close to the heat."

They hiked past blackened boulders and sulphur-stained craters until they reached a spot the locals called **Te Whāinga** — *The Waiting Ground*. There, within a circle of obsidian shards, sat a **stone basin filled with volcanic glass beads**.

As Jack stepped inside the circle, the glass began to hum. Then, one shard cracked — not from pressure, but release — and words rose from its fracture:

> *"Where earth still breathes and fire sighs,*
> *A marble waits with open eyes.*
> *Don't run from flame. Don't fear the ash —*
> *The truth is born where embers flash."*

Jack stepped forward without flinching. He placed his hand over the steam, feeling its warmth — not dangerous, but *deep.* Like something old and honest.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — dark maroon and ember-orange, with golden veins like lava cracks glowing from within. It pulsed softly, like a sleeping volcano dreaming of thunder.

ROCK OCTOPUSSY

A strange name, a fierce spirit — this marble twisted with chaotic elegance, its swirls curling like tentacles through magma.

Bernard grinned. "Rock Octopussy is the marble of wild truth. She doesn't ask for permission. She *erupts* — but only when she knows it's needed. She's chaos… with purpose."

Jack placed the marble into the stone basin.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch — and the steam above them danced into the shape of a spiral before drifting upward.

Imogen tucked her sketchbook away. "That marble didn't just sit there. It *challenged* us."

Jack nodded. "And it knew we could take it."

Bernard turned toward the ocean. "Our next marble lies far across the Pacific — in **Hawaii**, where lava meets sea and legends live in the glow of the island fire."

Chapter 79: *Jack and the Glow Beneath the Black Sand*

BLUE PUMPKINS

The team touched down on the **Big Island of Hawai‘i**, where black sand beaches crunched beneath their feet and smoke coiled lazily from the distant **Kīlauea Volcano**. Lava had shaped this land — and it still whispered, softly, from cracks in the earth.

“I can feel it,” Ollie said. “The marble’s close.”

Bernard nodded. “This marble doesn’t just rest in the island. It *is* the island. Born of fire, cooled by ocean, strong as memory.”

Their guide, **Kaleo**, led them down a hidden trail at twilight to **Punalu‘u**, a black sand beach where turtles sometimes slept and the waves glowed faintly under moonlight. In a cave just behind the shore, carved into basalt, was a **petroglyph spiral** filled with volcanic salt.

Jack knelt beside it.

The salt shimmered, and molten red script began to form in the grooves:

> *"Where lava sings and ocean sighs,*
> *A marble waits with ancient ties.*
> *Not grasped, not claimed, not cooled in fear —*
> *But found when fire and soul grow clear."*

Jack stepped barefoot into the spiral, letting the salt bite slightly, grounding him.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — swirling obsidian black with fiery red veins glowing beneath the surface like magma frozen in mid-breath. Sparks flickered inside it, shifting with every turn.

BLUE PUMPKINS

Despite its name, the marble burned like the island’s heart. Its colour shifted — blue only when touched by moonlight, glowing orange near heat. Beautiful, unpredictable, alive.

Bernard’s voice was reverent. “Blue Pumpkins is the marble of elemental passion. She reminds us that true strength isn’t destructive — it *creates.* She turns pressure into power, and loss into light.”

Jack gently placed the marble into the centre of the spiral.

Pop!
The marble disappeared into the pouch — and the cave briefly lit up in soft red, as though fire and moonlight had shaken hands.

Imogen whispered, “She didn’t just burn. She *belonged.*”

Bernard looked to the north. “Next? We head to **Iceland**, where fire *meets* ice, and a marble waits in the quiet breath of glaciers and ash.”

Chapter 80: *Jack and the Whisper Beneath the Glacier*

SHARK TOONS

The team arrived near **Vatnajökull**, Europe's largest glacier. Towering walls of blue ice rose above them like frozen waves, while black volcanic sand crunched underfoot. Steam curled from distant vents, where geothermal warmth reminded them this land was still *alive* beneath its frozen skin.

"This place is... impossibly quiet," Imogen said, hugging her coat.

"That's where she waits," Bernard said, nodding toward the base of the glacier. "The marble here isn't loud. She's *listening.* To the cracks. To the slow shifts. To what melts *and* what endures."

They followed a guide named **Ásta** into a hidden ice cave — crystalline walls glowing pale aqua, smooth and ancient. In the centre of the chamber was a column of black rock poking up through the floor, encased in ice. Etched into the ice surrounding it were faint runes — glowing slightly in the glacier's glow.

As Jack approached, the runes shifted into words:

> *"Where fire sleeps in frozen breath,*
> *A marble waits near life and death.*
> *Not stirred by heat, nor sealed by frost —*
> *But found where nothing's truly lost."*

Jack placed his hand on the icy rock.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble slowly floated upward — icy teal and obsidian black, with tiny glints of silver and frost. It looked like a frozen ember — something that *could* burn again, but chose stillness for now.

SHARK TOONS

Cool, poised, weightless — like starlight suspended in time.

Bernard bowed his head. "Shark Toons is the marble of cold clarity. She shows that stillness doesn't mean stalling — it means *watching.* Waiting. Learning. She holds fire inside… but lets it rest."

Jack placed the marble against the frozen rock.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch, and the whole ice cave pulsed with soft light — like the glacier had taken a breath and exhaled stars.

Ollie whispered, "That one didn't need to move… but I think it *saw everything.*"

Jack nodded. "She knew. Before we did."

Bernard turned toward the rising sun. "Next? We head to **Algeria** — to ancient alleyways, desert winds, and a marble hidden in the colour of stories told by lantern light."

Chapter 81: *Jack and the Silence Beneath the Sand Sea*

POOHHEAD

The team arrived in the **Sahara Desert**, near the remote oasis town of **Tamanrasset**, deep in the south of Algeria. Here, wind shaped everything — rocks, memories, even stories. It whispered through empty valleys and painted dunes like brushstrokes across eternity.

“I can’t tell if this is peaceful or terrifying,” Lenny said, watching the sand swirl gently in spirals.

Bernard lowered his voice. “That’s how you know you’re near the marble. She doesn’t warn… she *waits.* In the stillest places.”

They joined a small Tuareg guide named **Salah**, who led them by camel to a rocky outcrop known as the **Whispering Teeth**, where stone pillars stood in jagged lines like broken piano keys.

At the base of the tallest pillar was a **circle of sun-bleached bones**, and in the middle: a single **scorpion-shaped carving** in the sand.

As Jack knelt beside it, the wind stopped. For one long moment, the Sahara *held its breath.*

Then glowing script stirred beneath the dust:

> *"Where sun forgets and stars recall,*
> *A marble waits where echoes fall.*
> *Don’t chase the dune, nor fear the night —*
> *Just lie where shadow finds the light."*

Jack didn’t speak.

He simply lay back in the sand and looked up at the sky.

It was empty.
And then it was *full.*

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — sandy gold and cracked white, with flecks of deep purple like bruises beneath the surface. Its texture was rough, almost scaly, but warm.

POOHHEAD

It shimmered with dry humour and deeper wisdom — the kind that comes not from answers… but from *patience.*

Bernard chuckled. “Poohhead is the marble of sun-worn strength. She carries no armour. No title. She walks long roads slowly, with laughter when others would break. She doesn’t ask — she *outlasts.*”

Jack cupped the marble, then placed it gently in the centre of the scorpion carving.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch — and a breeze stirred the dunes, reshaping the scorpion into a spiral before drifting away.

Imogen smiled faintly. “She wasn’t waiting to be found. She *knew* we were coming.”

Jack nodded. “And she made us earn it.”

Bernard gazed across the sands. “Next? We move from dunes to domes — to **Iran**, where poetry, shadows, and a marble rest beneath the vaulted skies of Isfahan.”

Chapter 82: *Jack and the Dome That Reflected the Sky*

PRINCESS KATE

The team arrived in **Isfahan**, where the architecture itself seemed to *breathe*. Blue-tiled mosques shimmered under the sun, and courtyards cooled the air with soft fountains and stone poetry.

“Everything’s made to reflect light,” Imogen whispered, sketching the arched entrance of the **Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque**.

“And light is where this marble hides,” Bernard replied, gazing up at the great golden dome. “Not in the sun… but in what it *touches.*”

Inside, the mosque was quiet, vast, and endless. The walls bloomed with spirals and verses from Persian poets, and the light filtering through the windows made it feel like they’d stepped into a mosaic made of dreams.

At the centre of the dome was a **rosette-shaped opening**, casting a circle of light directly onto the tiled floor below. As Jack stepped into it, glowing script shimmered down from the ceiling like falling petals:

> *"Where silence sings and colour bends,*
> *A marble waits as stillness mends.*
> *No voice to raise, no path to prove —*
> *Just feel the dome, and let it move."*

Jack didn’t speak.
He simply stood in the light.
He let it warm his hands, his face, and *his thoughts*.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — deep teal and dusky rose, with filigree-like swirls of gold running through its surface like lines of ancient poetry. It shimmered not brightly — but *beautifully.*

PRINCESS KATE

Graceful. Elegant. Powerful not through noise, but through *presence.*

Bernard lowered his head. “Princess Kate is the marble of dignified truth. She does not argue. She does not command. She *leads* by simply being what others are drawn to — light without fire, strength without noise.”

Jack placed the marble gently in the circle of light.

Pop!
It disappeared into the pouch, and the dome above seemed to glow just slightly brighter — as if the marble’s memory now lived within its walls.

Lenny smiled. “She didn’t need to prove herself.”

“No,” Jack said. “She just needed to be *seen.*”

Bernard looked toward the mountains. “Next stop: **Switzerland** — where snow falls on still lakes, and a marble waits within the reflection of the impossible.”

Chapter 83: *Jack and the Mirror That Refused to Break*

PEARLY QUEENS

The team arrived at the shores of **Lake Oeschinen**, nestled in the Swiss Alps. Surrounded by towering cliffs and pine forests, the lake was so clear it felt like glass — a perfect reflection of the world above.

“It's like we’re standing on the sky,” Ollie said, peering into the water.

“No,” said Bernard, “you’re standing on *yourself.* The marble here only shows itself when you see who you really are — not who you pretend to be.”

They hiked around the far side of the lake, where a small **stone chapel** rested at the edge of a cliff, half-forgotten and covered in moss. In its centre stood a round pool — unmoving, silver-blue, and rimmed with polished mirrors.

Jack stepped toward it, but saw not just his face… he saw every version of himself reflected back. The scared boy. The curious one. The tired one. The hopeful one.

The mirrors began to shimmer, and words etched themselves onto the pool’s surface:

> *"Where truth reflects but fear distorts,*
> *A marble waits in frozen courts.*
> *Don’t change your face. Don’t shift your stance —*
> *Just meet your gaze… and give it chance."*

Jack looked into the water and said, “I don’t know everything. But I’m trying.”

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — pale white with elegant pink and icy silver streaks, like sunrise on snow. Tiny sparkles danced across its shell, but they weren’t loud — they were soft, steady, beautiful.

PEARLY QUEENS

It rolled slowly in the air, reflecting Jack’s face over and over again — never quite the same, but always *true.*

Bernard whispered, “Pearly Queens is the marble of quiet reflection. She does not pretend. She does not flatter. She shows you as you *are* — and proves that’s already enough.”

Jack lowered the marble into the centre of the pool.

Pop!
It disappeared into the pouch — and a ripple spread across the water, then stilled. A perfect reflection once more.

Imogen smiled. “That one didn’t make me feel powerful.”

Jack nodded. “She made me feel… real.”

Bernard looked southeast. “And now we move from lakes to *legends* — to **Thailand**, where marble meets mystery in the deep south by the sea…”

Chapter 84: *Jack and the Spirit of the Shoreline*

IMOGEN

The team arrived at **Rawai Beach**, where longtail boats bobbed gently in the shallows, and golden offerings glinted in tiny spirit houses beneath banyan trees. The sea was calm, the air heavy with salt and incense.

“This place feels like it’s listening,” Imogen said softly, barefoot in the sand.

Bernard nodded. “Because it is. The marble here doesn’t shout or shimmer — she waits. She watches. She *remembers*.”

A local elder, **Khun Mali**, guided them along a narrow coastal path to a hidden **sea cave**, only accessible during low tide. Inside, soft light filtered through cracks in the stone. The walls were covered in faded **fish-scale mosaics** and old offerings — marigolds, seashells, weathered silk ribbons.

In the centre was a **bowl carved into the rock**, filled with rainwater and small, round stones smoothed by decades of waves.

As Jack leaned over it, the water rippled — and glowing Thai script shifted into English:

> *"Where ocean sighs and roots run deep,*
> *A marble waits where spirits sleep.*
> *Don’t stir the waves. Don’t cast a net —*
> *Just bow, and thank what you’ve not met."*

Jack closed his eyes. He didn’t ask for anything.

He simply said:
“Thank you.”

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — soft green and ocean blue, with swirling streaks of gold and flecks of red like floating lanterns. It glowed gently, as if lit by the prayers of a thousand ancestors.

IMOGEN

It shimmered in the cave’s light — graceful, grounded, and full of unspoken strength.

Bernard bowed. “Imogen is the marble of quiet reverence. She does not need to lead, but others *follow*. She honours what came before — and opens the way for what’s next.”

Jack held the marble to his heart, then placed it in the water.

Pop!
It slipped into the pouch — and a warm wind stirred the cave, lifting a marigold petal into the air before carrying it out to sea.

Imogen placed her hand over the water. “That one felt like family.”

Jack nodded. “Like a voice that never stopped whispering — even when we weren’t listening.”

Bernard turned north. “Next stop… **Bangkok** — a city of colour, chaos, temples, and a marble tucked within the rhythm of the rush.”

Chapter 85: *Jack and the Beat Beneath the City*

SPYDERMAN

The team arrived in **Bangkok** on a rainy afternoon. Neon signs glowed in puddles. Street vendors laughed beneath colourful umbrellas. The air smelled like lemongrass and petrol. The **Chao Phraya River** flowed steadily through the chaos, watching it all.

“This city never sits still,” said Lenny, dodging a tuk-tuk as it honked past.

“That’s why the marble chose this place,” Bernard said. “She *moves*. Not to flee, but to *feel*. To follow the rhythm others miss.”

They followed the winding side-streets into the **Old City**, to the steps of **Wat Ratchabophit**, a temple few tourists visited. Gold and mirror-tile mosaics sparkled through the rain. Inside, beneath the ornate ceiling, was a low wooden drum resting on an altar of red lacquer and lotus petals.

Jack approached.

The drum thudded softly as he touched it.

Then glowing script shimmered in the raindrops that landed on its surface:

> *"Where noise is thick and silence thin,*
> *A marble waits beneath the din.*
> *Don’t chase the calm. Don’t hush the roar —*
> *Just feel the beat, and ask no more."*

Jack didn’t try to quiet the city.
He *joined* it.

He tapped the drum once.
A tuk-tuk honked. A monk chanted. A bird cawed.
It all became… music.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — deep crimson and electric gold, with streaks of mirror-like silver. It pulsed to the rhythm of the city — never chaotic, just *alive*.

SPYDERMAN

It glimmered like Bangkok at night — buzzing with energy, full of potential.

Bernard grinned. “Spydèrman is the marble of motion and instinct. He doesn’t plan — he *moves*. He trusts the moment and reminds us that sometimes, the only way forward… is to *go*.”

Jack lifted the marble and placed it gently atop the drum.

Pop!
It disappeared into the pouch — and the rain stopped, just for a second. The lights got brighter. The world leaned in.

Ollie exhaled. “It’s like… we became part of the city.”

Jack nodded. “We didn’t conquer it. We *joined* it.”

Bernard looked toward the north. “Next stop… **Cambodia** — where jungle temples crumble and a marble waits beneath the roots of time.”

Chapter 86: *Jack and the Roots of the Forgotten Temple*

ONE EYED DOWG

The team arrived at **Ta Prohm**, just outside **Siem Reap** — one of the most haunting temples of the **Angkor** ruins. Unlike the polished halls of Angkor Wat, Ta Prohm had been left wild. Enormous silk-cotton trees wrapped their roots around the ancient stone like fingers holding a secret.

“It’s like the jungle is trying to remember something,” Imogen whispered, sketching a tangle of moss and brick.

“That’s because this marble doesn’t rest in history,” Bernard said. “She *is* the history — what it becomes when you stop trying to control it.”

They followed a crumbling corridor to a hidden chamber, where a **tree root had cracked through the ceiling**, curling down into the centre of the floor. There, lying in a bowl of dust and ancient offerings, was a single smooth stone.

As Jack reached for it, the root pulsed slightly — and glowing script formed along its length:

> *"Where memory weeps and silence grows,*
> *A marble waits where nothing knows.*
> *Don’t lift the root, don’t break the vine —*
> *Just honour what outlived the line."*

Jack didn’t disturb anything.

He sat. Listened. Let the dust settle. Let the stillness speak.

And that’s when it happened.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — dark jade with streaks of ancient gold and weathered grey. Its surface was uneven, as if partially carved by time itself. Tiny bits of moss clung to it, glowing faintly in the chamber light.

ONE EYED DOWG

Rough. Real. Rooted. It spun slowly, watching… even though it had only *one eye* to see.

Bernard bowed. “One Eyed Dowg is the marble of persistence. He doesn't shine. He *endures.* He reminds us that survival is not always graceful — but it is *powerful.*”

Jack didn’t polish him.

He placed the marble back in the bowl.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch — and the root above them curled tighter, as if it had accepted the offering.

Ollie looked around. “It didn’t feel like we found him.”

Jack nodded. “He let *us* stay.”

Bernard stood. “Next stop… **Malaysia**, where sky gardens bloom and a marble sleeps in the balance between concrete and cloud.”

Chapter 87: *Jack and the Garden Between the Towers*

SKITTY SKATTY

The team arrived in **Kuala Lumpur**, where the famous **Petronas Towers** stood like silver trees rising from the city. But today's destination wasn't their dizzying heights — it was something quieter, hidden in the shadow below.

"Are we… going underground?" Lenny asked as they stepped through a small gate near a monorail station.

"No," Bernard said, "we're going *between* worlds."

They followed a narrow path into a secret green space — **Perdana Botanical Gardens**, tucked inside the city's heartbeat. Ferns unfurled beside concrete walls. Vines hugged rusted railings. Above them, the skyline shimmered — below, frogs chirped, and dragonflies zipped through still ponds.

At the centre of a tiny bamboo grove stood a **floating platform** surrounded by water lilies. On it rested a small **stone lantern**, cracked by age, but still standing.

As Jack stepped onto the platform, a lotus flower opened at his feet — and glowing script unfurled across the lantern's surface:

> *"Where sky and stem and silence meet,*
> *A marble waits beneath your feet.*
> *Not in the roots, nor in the stone —*
> *But in the space you call your own."*

Jack stood still.

He didn't look up.
He didn't look down.
He just… breathed.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — pale blue and soft pink, threaded with streaks of jade and shimmering silver. Its shape was just a little uneven, like it had been hand-formed from mist and memory.

SKITTY SKATTY

Delicate but playful — a marble of dance, pause, and bloom. Light on her feet, but *rooted* in the real.

Bernard smiled. "Skitty Skatty is the marble of balance. She teaches us that you don't need to choose between fast or slow, growth or stillness, city or jungle. You can be *both.* You can *bloom anyway.*"

Jack gently placed the marble into the opening of the lantern.

Pop!
It disappeared into the pouch — and the water around the platform rippled, sending lilies drifting outward like little rafts of joy.

Imogen grinned. "That one *skipped* into the pouch."

Jack laughed. "She was never in a hurry — and yet, she always *knew* where to go."

Bernard looked south. "Next? We fly to **Indonesia** — where volcanoes sleep and temples rise from mist, and a marble waits atop the stairway to the sky."

Chapter 88: *Jack and the Stairway to the Sky*

PLANET ZOG

The team arrived at **Borobudur**, the world's largest Buddhist temple, hidden in the lush heart of **Java**. At dawn, it appeared not as stone — but as shadow and light, unfolding upward like a spiral mountain.

They climbed in silence.

Each terrace was carved with stories: of gods, of battles, of peace. The air was thick with incense and golden light. The sky barely stirred, as if *listening*.

"This place isn't just a monument," Imogen said, voice hushed. "It's a memory made of stone."

"And memories," said Bernard, "are where marbles often hide — especially the ones that change *everything.*"

At the very top — surrounded by bell-shaped stupas — they found a **single open shrine**. Inside was not a Buddha… but a smooth black stone resting in lotus petals.

When Jack reached for it, glowing script bloomed across the ground beneath their feet:

> *"Where peace climbs high and feet grow still,*
> *A marble waits with silent will.*
> *Not in the chant, nor in the climb —*
> *But in the moment lost to time."*

Jack sat.

He let the silence take him — not empty, but full.
Not absence, but *awareness.*

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — deep volcanic grey with spirals of ivory and sunset-orange. It had a slow, turning presence… like a planet caught in prayer.

PLANET ZOG

It spun gently in the air, calm and colossal. Not heavy — *anchored.*

Bernard bowed low. "Planet Zog is the marble of timeless perspective. He teaches that you don't need to rush. That not all answers arrive as lightning. Some come… like sunrise."

Jack placed the marble into the lotus.

Pop!
It disappeared into the pouch — and for just a moment, all the bells in the stupas *tinkled*, as though a breeze had moved through each one at once.

Ollie exhaled. "That one… *grounded* me."

Jack nodded. "He didn't need us to chase him. We just had to show up."

Bernard turned his gaze west. "And next? We return to the heart — to the United Kingdom. There's a place you know well, Jack… and a marble waiting right there on the banks of Canning Town, London."

Chapter 89: *Jack and the Marble Under the Concrete Crown*

HARRY BROWN

The team stepped off the DLR into the tangled streets of **Canning Town**. It was loud, fast, stubborn — and somehow full of soul. Pigeons flapped over chicken shops. Markets buzzed. A double-decker groaned past, its windows fogged from the inside.

"This doesn't feel like one of the magical places," said Ollie, dodging a bike.

"No," Jack smiled. "It feels like *home.* The kind you earn."

Bernard nodded. "The marble here doesn't shine on shelves. He rolls in pockets. Bounces down steps. He doesn't *hide* — he *belongs.*"

They walked through back alleys and underpasses until they found the **remains of a playground**, abandoned but spray-painted with wild, brilliant colour. At its centre: a cracked roundabout spinning slowly in the wind.

Jack stepped on.

The whole structure gave a little squeak — and glowing script appeared across the painted platform:

> *"Where scuffs are badges and pride is worn,*
> *A marble waits, rough-cut and torn.*
> *Don't clean the grime. Don't raise the throne —*
> *Just stand your ground and call it home."*

Jack didn't straighten his hoodie.
He didn't try to tidy the scene.

He stood. Proud. Real. *Himself.*

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — deep navy with flecks of silver, red, and gold. Its surface was scuffed, a little chipped, but alive with history — like a badge passed between brothers.

HARRY BROWN

Tough, loyal, and loud when needed — but still carried with care.

Bernard grinned. "Harry Brown is the marble of street loyalty. He's not polished — he's *proven.* He teaches that scars don't make you less. They make you *known.*"

Jack held the marble in his palm, closed his fist… and then opened it again.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch — and a fox slipped across the playground, pausing only to nod.

Imogen smirked. "That one didn't roll… he *swaggered.*"

Jack chuckled. "And he'll *never* leave that pouch now."

Bernard raised his nose. "Next stop? Let's follow that fox — to **Luxemburg**, where stories wear antlers and a marble waits in the shadow of a forest made of fairy tales."

Chapter 90: *Jack and the Watcher in the Wall*

EUGENE PANFACE

The team arrived in **Luxembourg City**, where the ancient **Bock Casemates** — a network of underground tunnels and hidden fortresses — wound beneath the capital like a sleeping beast. High above, flags fluttered from medieval towers. Below, darkness whispered.

“This place is built like a puzzle,” Imogen said, tracing her hand along a moss-covered stone wall.

“That’s because the marble here doesn’t *move*,” Bernard said. “He *watches.* He’s been here through sieges, secrets… and silence.”

They followed a narrow spiral stair into the deepest part of the casemates — a place where torches once flickered and time now seemed to stand still.

There, in a corner long forgotten, they found a tiny **arrow slit** overlooking the cliffside. Inside the stone ledge sat a smooth circle of soot — like something had sat there for centuries.

Jack stepped closer.

Glowing words curled up the wall like vines:

> *"Where stone stands tall and whispers hide,*
> *A marble waits with steady pride.*
> *No throne, no flare, no steps to race —*
> *Just eyes that never leave their place."*

Jack didn’t rush.
He sat beside the arrow slit.
He looked out — and *stayed*.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — smoky grey with a flash of crimson through the core, like a signal flare buried in a bunker. Its surface was smooth but heavy, grounded.

EUGENE PANFACE

A sentinel. A shield. A watcher who *never* leaves his post.

Bernard bowed. “Eugene Panface is the marble of loyalty without applause. He doesn’t chase fame. He doesn’t need praise. He *holds the line.* Always.”

Jack gently placed the marble in the stone circle.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch — and outside the arrow slit, a bird of prey flew past… silent, precise.

Ollie whispered, “That one… *protected* us, didn’t he?”

Jack nodded. “Even before we got here.”

Bernard looked toward the northeast. “Next? We travel to **Estonia** — where forests hum with magic, and a marble waits in the song of trees that remember everything.”

Chapter 91: *Jack and the Song of the Silent Pines*

PARAK HOOTS

The team journeyed into the heart of **Lahemaa National Park**, where pine forests stretched endlessly, broken only by still lakes and wooden footpaths. The air smelled of birch, earth, and something older — something *watching*.

“Feels like a fairy tale,” Imogen whispered, sketching mushrooms the size of teacups.

“That’s because Estonia doesn’t tell stories,” Bernard said. “It *remembers* them. And the marble here? She’s a song that was never sung aloud… just *felt.*”

Their local guide, **Maarja**, led them through a peat bog to a **sacred stone circle**, hidden within the trees. In its centre stood a wooden pole wrapped in cloth strips and tiny bells — a **wish tree**.

Jack stepped into the ring, and the bells trembled though there was no wind.

Then, glowing script appeared in the bark:

> *"Where roots remember and echoes grow,*
> *A marble waits where no winds blow.*
> *Don’t hum. Don’t speak. Don’t seek to see —*
> *Just listen long, and you will be."*

Jack closed his eyes.

And listened.

To the forest.
To the hush of the moss.
To the memory of footsteps long gone.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — deep emerald green with shimmering golden swirls and flecks of silver that blinked like dew drops. It spun slowly… quietly… and Jack almost missed the soft humming that came from it.

PARAK HOOTS

Wise. Wistful. A marble that heard every story — and forgot *none.*

Bernard whispered, “Parak Hoots is the marble of deep memory. She doesn’t shout. She *knows*. She listens to what’s lost… and sings it back only when you’re ready.”

Jack tucked the marble into a ribbon at the wish tree’s base.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch — and far in the forest, a tree creaked… like it had just finished a very old sentence.

Lenny stepped back. “I feel like… that one’s still watching us.”

“She is,” Jack said softly. “She always will be.”

Bernard looked westward. “Next? We sail across the Baltic to **Iceland** — where marbles sleep in frost and ash. Or… shall we visit **Wales**, and let a familiar rain guide us to our next legend?”

Chapter 92: *Jack and the Eyes of the Steppe*

GOOGLES

The team had travelled far from any airport or city. They rode sturdy Mongolian ponies across the **Orkhon Valley**, a place so vast and silent that Jack felt like even his thoughts echoed. The grasslands rolled on forever. Hawks circled overhead. A single **ger** (nomadic yurt) stood on a distant hill like a white pebble dropped by the sky.

"There's nowhere to hide out here," Lenny muttered.

Bernard sniffed the wind. "That's because this marble doesn't *hide.* He *sees.* He's always watching. And he never misses a detail."

They were guided by a young eagle hunter named **Batu**, who wore a thick fur coat and carried himself like someone who spoke more with animals than people. He led them up a hillside known as **Tsagaan Khairkhan**, the White Sacred Mountain.

At the top, where stones had been arranged into ancient symbols, Batu pointed to a **wooden viewing stand** built generations ago to spot storms and travellers. Resting atop it, surrounded by eagle feathers and carved bone, was a leather-wrapped case.

Jack opened it slowly.

Inside: a single, smooth marble, and beneath it, an inscription burned into the wood:

> *"Where eyes see far and mouths stay still,*
> *A marble waits on wind-swept hill.*
> *Don't shout, don't chase, don't claim your part —*
> *Just watch, and feel the beating heart."*

Jack stood quietly.
He didn't reach.
He just let the wind rush past his ears… and listened.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble lifted — cool grey with swirling brown and white bands like clouds over tundra. Across its surface: tiny glass lenses, shining faintly like goggles catching the light.

GOOGLES

Not flashy. But always focused. Always *looking ahead.*

Bernard smiled. "Googles is the marble of observation. He doesn't lead. He *spots*. He teaches that wisdom comes not from being loud — but from *seeing what others don't.*"

Jack nodded. "He's been with us this whole time. Watching. Waiting."

He gently placed Googles on the carved stand.

Pop!
The marble disappeared into the pouch — and far above, an eagle cried out as if in approval before gliding away into the blue.

Imogen smiled. "I think he *knew* we were coming."

Jack looked across the vast plain. "He knew *everything.*"

Bernard pointed east. "Our next trail winds through **Kazakhstan** — across wind-carved canyons and forgotten star maps. The marble there doesn't watch… he *remembers.*"

Chapter 93: *Jack and the Star That Fell Twice*

PEARLY KINGS

The team arrived near the **Charyn Canyon**, often called Kazakhstan's "Grand Canyon" — but quieter, older, and somehow deeper, as if the rocks themselves had been listening to time instead of measuring it.

Towering cliffs burned red in the sunlight. The ground crackled underfoot. There were no signposts here. Just wind… and memory.

"This place feels like something's about to wake up," Lenny whispered.

"Or something already has," Bernard said. "The marble here doesn't need to shine. He *remembers* shining."

They followed a winding trail into a side ravine known by locals as **The Watcher's Spine** — a place where nomads once read the stars from shadows. In the rock, Jack noticed a small **metal disk**, partially buried and covered in scratches. As he brushed the dust away, glowing script shimmered beneath his fingers:

> *"Where stars once burned and stories rest,*
> *A marble waits in earth's own chest.*
> *Don't dig, don't dream, don't ask what's true —*
> *Just sit where sky once passed through you."*

Jack sat down on the stone beside the disc.
The wind stopped.
His thoughts didn't.

He let the moment in.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — deep bronze and obsidian, with faint constellations etched into its surface and one glowing spiral like a galaxy frozen mid-spin.

PEARLY KINGS

Rough, ancient, and absolutely still — like he'd seen the beginning… and was quietly waiting for the end.

Bernard said softly, "Pearly Kings are the marble of cosmic memory. He remembers what others forget. He holds the truth not in words — but in *weight.* He reminds us that not all stars burn. Some just *carry on.*"

Jack nodded. He didn't smile. He *understood.*

He placed the marble gently on the cracked metal disc.

Pop!
It disappeared into the pouch — and a sudden gust stirred the canyon, lifting red dust into a spiral that twisted toward the stars.

Ollie said, "I felt like he saw through *all* of us."

Imogen nodded. "And he didn't judge. He just… kept us."

Bernard looked southwest. "Now, let's turn to the turquoise coastlines and bustling bazaars of **Panama** — where desert meets the Mediterranean, and a marble waits in the shadow of ancient ruins and rising light."

Chapter 94: *Jack and the Lock That Couldn't Close*

SHINY TOADS

The team arrived at the **Panama Canal**, where ships from all over the world lined up like patient beasts of burden, waiting to pass from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Machinery groaned. Water surged. And every drop seemed to know it had somewhere to *go*.

"This place moves like clockwork," Imogen said, notebook fluttering in the breeze.

"And the marble here?" Bernard said. "He *doesn't.* Because he already *knows* where he's going."

They made their way to a small, forgotten **observation tower** near the old **Miraflores Locks**. Weeds grew between its stairs. The walls were tagged with faded graffiti. At the very top, a rusted **control lever** sat untouched beneath a dusty glass panel.

On the base of the lever, Jack found a metal plate — and as he wiped it clean, glowing words flickered across the brass:

> *"Where oceans meet and waters rise,*
> *A marble waits behind the guise.*
> *Don't push, don't pull, don't break the dam —*
> *Just open up — and know you can."*

Jack didn't pull the lever.

He stood still.
Letting the sound of water crashing below wash through him.
Letting the canal pass… without forcing anything.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — sea-green and silver, with translucent streaks like swirling tides, and golden specs that flickered like distant ships' lights.

SHINY TOADS

Slick, smart, and always moving — but never rushing.

Bernard grinned. "Shiny Toads is the marble of controlled flow. He doesn't rush. He *allows*. He teaches that power isn't about force — it's about *timing.*"

Jack touched the lever lightly. Not enough to move it. Just enough to *know* it was there.

Pop!
The marble disappeared into the pouch — and below them, a massive ship horn echoed, and the lock gates began to open like the sea *knew.*

Ollie leaned over the railing. "That marble didn't push forward…"

Imogen added, "It *waited* for the right moment."

Jack nodded. "Sometimes, that's all you need."

Bernard looked across the canal. "Our next crossing? **Armenia** — where marbles sleep in monasteries and the wind carries ancient prayers up into the mountain sky."

Chapter 95: *Jack and the Echo of the Cross-Stone*

SPIDER YAPS

The team arrived at **Noravank Monastery**, nestled in a narrow gorge of red cliffs, where the rock seemed to glow with quiet fire under the evening sun. Ancient **khachkars** — Armenian cross-stones — lined the path like guardians, each one carved with swirling patterns and forgotten names.

“This whole place feels carved out of faith,” Imogen whispered, sketching a cross-stone that had moss growing through its centre.

Bernard padded forward. “The marble here doesn’t shine. He *endures.* He doesn’t ask for worship. He *remembers*.”

They followed an old monk named **Father Aram** to a small cave behind the monastery, reachable only by a crumbling stone stair and a flickering candle trail. Inside was a single khachkar leaning against the back wall — cracked, but still standing.

At its base sat a **bowl of ash and wildflowers**. As Jack knelt before it, light from above touched the khachkar — and words began to glow softly across the cracks:

> *"Where stone stands still and time gives grace,*
> *A marble waits in sacred place.*
> *Not touched by fear, nor bent by war —*
> *Just held, and handed evermore."*

Jack didn’t try to read too much into it.

He simply bowed his head, placing his palm on the cold stone… and felt a heartbeat through the marble beneath.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble rose — muted clay red, with veins of gold and dusty ivory, its texture slightly rough. It bore carvings so faint, they could only be seen in the right light — like secrets meant only for those who *looked twice.*

SPIDER YAPS

Solemn. Historic. Carried by generations… never claimed.

Bernard whispered, “Spider Yaps is the marble of legacy. He does not move fast. He moves *forever.* He reminds us that sacred isn’t loud — it’s *lasting.*”

Jack placed the marble into the wildflower bowl.

Pop!
It disappeared into the pouch — and the wind outside the cave carried the smell of apricots and stone.

Ollie exhaled. “That marble didn’t sparkle.”

Jack nodded. “It *stood.* That’s enough.”

Bernard looked toward the Caucasus. “Let’s follow the mountain spine to **Georgia**, where a marble sleeps beneath song and shadow in the City of Bridges.”

Chapter 96: *Jack and the Song Beneath the Sulfur Sky*

BUBBLE GUM

The team arrived in **Tbilisi**, Georgia's capital — a city draped in balconies, steam, and history. From ancient sulphur baths to leaning houses of painted wood, everything seemed to *sing*. Not loudly, but like an old friend humming as they worked.

"This place feels like a story that never stopped being written," Imogen whispered, watching colourful laundry flap in the breeze between rooftops.

"That's why the marble here stayed," Bernard said. "He didn't come for the silence… he stayed for the *song*."

They wandered toward the **Abanotubani** district, the old bathhouse quarter, where warm mineral steam drifted from domed rooftops and tiled fountains gurgled beside fig trees. An elderly man named **Mikheil** led them to a closed-off section of the oldest bath — a tiled chamber hidden behind a stone arch, long abandoned.

There, a **wooden lyra** — a traditional Georgian harp — sat cracked and stringless on a platform. At its base, nestled in salt-crusted tiles, was a copper bowl filled with rose petals.

Jack stepped forward.
And the air *vibrated.*

Faint glowing script crawled across the inner wall, like song lyrics remembered too late:

> *"Where voices blend and footsteps slow,*
> *A marble waits where heartbeats grow.*
> *Not in the words, nor sharpest tune —*
> *But in between — like dusk and moon."*

Jack didn't touch the bowl.
He *hummed*. A soft, uncertain note.

Imogen joined in.
Then Lenny. Then Ollie.

No lyrics. Just harmony.

The pouch pulsed.

A marble floated upward — dusty rose and cream with faint gilded lines that moved like soundwaves. As it spun, soft tones echoed around the room — not music, but memory.

BUBBLE GUM

Warm. Familiar. Joyful — but not childish. A marble of harmony in chaos.

Bernard nodded. "Bubble Gum is the marble of shared voices. She doesn't sing the loudest. She sings *with*. She reminds us that together… we *resonate.*"

Jack gently placed the marble in the rose petals.

Pop!
It vanished into the pouch — and from the tiles above, a single drop of mineral water echoed like a note completing a chord.

Ollie blinked. "She's still singing."

Jack smiled. "She always will."

Bernard looked ahead. "Now… just two marbles remain. Let's head to **Slovenia** *— where rivers vanish into caves, and a marble hides in the spaces between seen and sensed."*

Chapter 97: *The Carnival of the Piranha*

SPOTTY PIRANHA

The pouch had been quiet.

Too quiet.

Until it *leapt* out of Jack's hoodie and did something it hadn't done since the start of their mission: it *splashed*.

"Did it just jump?" Lenny gasped as the pouch bounced across the pavement and dove straight into the shallows of the **Rambla of Montevideo**, the wide boulevard that hugged the Río de la Plata.

Ollie pointed. "It's chasing something!"

They followed it along the promenade, where music from a nearby **candombe parade** rang through the air — booming drums, spinning dancers, glitter, and colourful streamers flying in the wind.

In the middle of it all, skipping between drums and dodging confetti, was a single, mischievous marble. It didn't glow. It *wiggled*. It didn't float. It *darted* — through puddles, paint, and popcorn.

When Jack caught up, the marble launched itself into a fountain at the centre of **Plaza Matriz**. He reached into the water, and as he touched it, *the whole fountain lit up.*

Words formed in the dancing spray:

> *"Where rhythm bites and colour runs,*
> *A marble plays with startled puns.*
> *Don't chase, don't scold, don't take offence —*
> *Just laugh, and feel the nonsense tense."*

The pouch pulsed.

And the marble rose — turquoise with crimson spots like a tropical fish in a hurry, its swirls shifting direction like it couldn't *ever* make up its mind.

SPOTTY PIRANHA

Bernard chuckled. "Spotty Piranha is the marble of *chaotic joy.* He splashes when things get too serious. He reminds us that sometimes… laughter *is* the lesson."

Jack wiped water off his face. "He's been here the *whole* time, hasn't he?"

Imogen nodded. "He just didn't want to be *found.* He wanted to make *us* find *fun.*"

Jack held the marble high.

Pop!
It dove into the pouch with a wet slurp — and as it did, a rainbow of water shot from the fountain, soaking the entire team.

The locals cheered. A dancer handed Jack a carnival mask shaped like a fish.

Ollie grinned. "Now *that's* how you catch a marble!"

Bernard shook off water. "And that, my friends… was number ninety-*eight-and-a-half*."

Chapter 98: *Jack and the Mystery of the Havana Mirage*

YELLOW DOTTIES

The hot Cuban sun shimmered over the streets of Havana as the team stepped out of their colourful taxi. The city buzzed with music, dance, and the smell of street food — but Jack felt something different in the air. A kind of... magic.

“This is the last one,” he said, clutching the pouch tightly. It hummed gently — 99 marbles already nestled inside.

Lenny stretched and grinned. “So what’s the plan, Captain Marble?”

Bernard, their golden retriever and magical guide, sniffed the breeze and barked, “Follow the music.”

They wandered through the old town — past crumbling colonial mansions, lively salsa bands, and painted murals — until Imogen stopped dead in her tracks.

“There,” she said, pointing to a mural of a yellow-spotted lizard. Beneath it: a strange riddle painted in faded red.

> *"Where rhythm breathes and stories float,*
> *A marble hides inside a note.*
> *When sunset flares and dancers spin,*
> *The pouch will know where it has been."*

They spent hours exploring: jazz clubs, street dances, even a cigar shop with a secret tunnel (thanks to Bernard’s nose). Nothing.

That night, the sky turned tangerine-orange as they found themselves in **Plaza Vieja**, where an old man played a trumpet as dancers spun barefoot across cobblestones.

Suddenly, Jack’s pouch began to glow.

“It’s here,” whispered Ollie.

YELLOW DOTTIES

The dancers parted, revealing a small glowing marble sitting in a carved groove in the plaza’s centre — **bright yellow with golden dots**, pulsing like the beat of a drum.

Jack stepped forward and picked it up. The moment it touched his hand:

SWOOSH!

The pouch sparkled with golden light and let out a soft chime. All 100 marbles now sat nestled inside, glowing softly, each with a story, a country, and a memory.

Jack looked at his team — Lenny, Ollie, Imogen, Bernard — and smiled.

“We did it.”

Chapter 99: *Jack and the Marble Called Becky*

BECKY

The team had travelled the world.

From the icy fjords of Norway to the red sands of Algeria. From the streets of Bangkok to the caves of Slovenia. Each marble in Jack's pouch glowed now with a quiet, collected power.

But one marble was still missing.

And the pouch?
It tugged softly — not toward somewhere *new*, but somewhere *known.*

They stepped off the bus in **Bablock Hythe**, Oxfordshire — Jack's second home, nestled along the **River Thames**, where willows wept softly into the current and swans glided like floating kings.

"This feels…" Jack paused. "Right."

Bernard barked once. "She's here."

They walked across the pebbled path toward the **old ferry point**, now long unused. A wooden jetty creaked with age. As the wind picked up, Jack saw **two familiar faces** appear by the boat shed.

"Mum?!" Jack cried.

"Dad?!" shouted Ollie and Lenny together.

And just behind them — **Rebecca**. Imogen ran forward and threw her arms around them.

"You came back," Rebecca whispered.

"We never stopped following you," their dad said, kneeling down. "We just knew… one day, you'd find her."

On the edge of the jetty stood a single **marble case** — polished wood with carvings of every continent.

Jack opened it. Inside was a marble unlike any other — soft peach and gold, flecked with turquoise and glowing gently like a warm sunrise.

BECKY

She pulsed once — and the pouch in Jack's hoodie *shivered*.

One by one, the other marbles rose into the air, orbiting Becky like planets circling a sun. No longer just marbles — but memories. Lessons. *Friends.*

Bernard sat quietly. "Becky is the marble of *belonging*. She's not the first. She's the one who brings it all together. The one who reminds you… what matters most has *always* been with you."

Jack placed Becky into the centre of the pouch.

Pop!

The entire pouch burst with golden light — then settled, calm and still. Heavy. Whole.

Imogen clutched Jack's arm. "So… is that it? Have we found all 99?"

Jack looked out across the river.

"No," he said. "We've *earned* them."

Lenny grinned. "And we brought them *home.*"

Ollie bounced. "So what now?"

Bernard smiled. "Now? We *share* them."

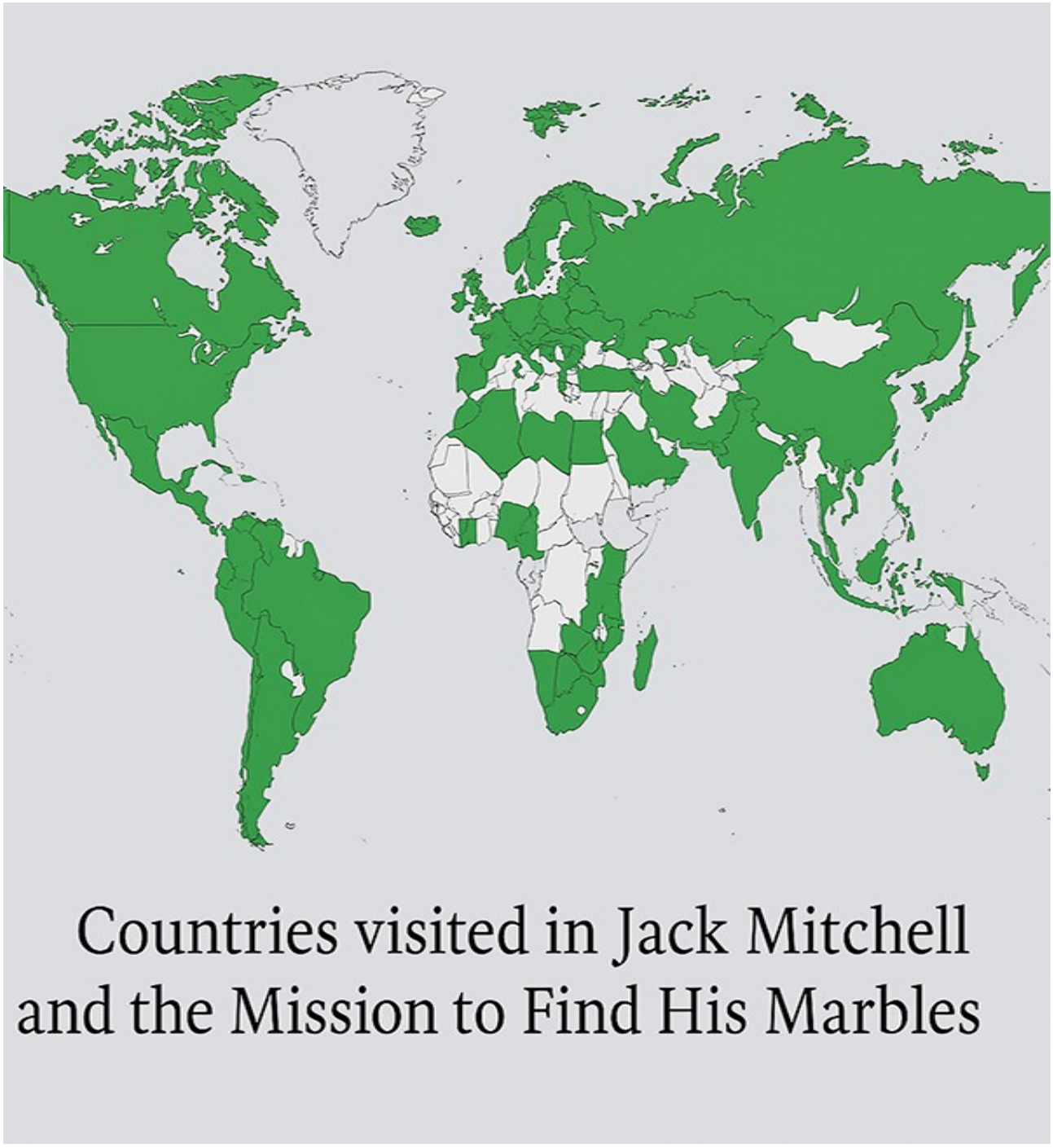
Epilogue: *The Pouch of 99*

That night, beneath the stars, Jack placed the pouch on the old wooden bench by the river.

One by one, each marble glowed… and disappeared — not lost, but returned to the world. Waiting for new adventurers. New hearts. New missions.

And the pouch?

It was empty again.

But it didn't feel *lost*.

It felt *ready*.